University of Alberta

Theatre as Intervention into Trauma: Wolfgang Borchert's The Outsider and Erwin Sylvanus' Dr. Korczak and the Children in the Post-World War Two German Era

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the potential of theatre to serve as an intervention into past trauma. Wolfgang Borchert's The Outsider and Erwin Sylvanus' Dr. Korczak and the Children are considered as means by which to bear witness to the trauma of World War Two and the Holocaust in the post-World War Two German era. Chapter One examines art's perversion under the Third Reich. Chapter Two provides an overview of The Outsider and Dr. Korczak and the Children, and considers their reception in postwar Germany. Chapter Three establishes Trauma Theory as a framework by which to analyze these plays. Chapter Four considers the ways in which the plays bear witness to the trauma of World War Two and the Holocaust, and the ways in which reality became an ephemeral concept following the Nazi era. Chapter Five examines 'choice', 'guilt', and 'ownership' as stages in resolution of Germany's traumatic experience of the War.

It is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it.
Theodor Adorno

We must look into the abyss in order to see beyond it.
Robert Jay Lifton

Dedication

To my husband, Brad Kosid, for his patience, love, and support.

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INTRODUCTION

"Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." So reads a plaque mounted outside the World War Two Nazi concentration camp at Dachau. The homily continues to remind both German citizens and people from all over the world of this painful, highly traumatic history, yet it also offers hope that examination of this history may permit a better future to unfold. After the devastation of World War Two, the fall of Hitler's Third Reich, the ratification of Germany's unconditional surrender to the Allied Forces on May 8, 1945, and the revelation of the horrors of Hitler's Endlösung, or "Final Solution," the German people had every reason to want to obliterate the previous twelve years from their collective consciousness. In the words of Charles Maier (1988), "In Germany, it seems, time doesn't heal wounds; it kills the sensation of pain" (The Unmasterable Past 144). Literature and theatre, however, may both reflect and challenge a society, especially one at the crossroads facing post-World War Two Germany. Caught between a traumatic past and an uncertain future, the potential anesthetization to be accomplished by the mere passage of time is precisely what playwrights Wolfgang Borchert and Erwin Sylvanus disrupted in 1946 and 1957, with their respective dramas, The Outsider and Dr. Korczak and the Children. Although working with the German originals of these plays, Draußen vor der Tür, and Korczak und die Kinder would have been entirely appropriate in this thesis, and indeed even preferable, my own background in the field of theatre as opposed to German has led me to conclude that working almost solely in English was the most reliable course of study. Although my lack of fluency in the German language has proved at times a challenge, I am confident that I have chosen excellent translations of these plays with which to work. Borchert's German title,

Draußen vor der Tür, translates directly as "Outside the Door." A.D. Porter, who has composed the only other translation of this play that I am aware of, renders this as The Man Outside.[1] Although I prefer this title, my own consultation of the German text, in conjunction with discussions I have shared with German specialists, has led me to prefer, on the whole, Benedikt's translation of the drama. All page citations refer to this translation, and the text is hereafter referred to as The Outsider. I have also used Benedikt's translation of Korczak und die Kinder, the only English translation of Sylvanus' drama of which I am aware. This is referred to hereafter as Korczak.

Both Borchert and Sylvanus deal with World War Two, but from radically different perspectives. The Outsider drags us through the horrors of both the war and its aftermath, as we follow its protagonist, German soldier Beckmann, in his attempt to return to his German 'home.' As the drama progresses, we share Beckmann's painful realization that this home no longer exists, either as an actual place or an ideal. Loosely speaking, Borchert's drama belongs to the genre of historical fiction, placing fictional characters and events in a somewhat authentic historical setting.[2] Sylvanus' Korczak belongs to the closely related genre of fictional history, using theatrical techniques to portray real historical figures and events.[3] The play is about a real-life Polish Jew, Dr. Janusz Korczak, and his desperate attempts to save the children in his care from deportation to Nazi death camps.

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[1] M.F. Staab (see Fn. 38) has also translated the title as The Man Outside. Although I have discussed Staab's work in production in Chapter Four, his text is an unpublished manuscript authorized for production only, and so it has not been appropriate for me to utilize Staab's translation in this thesis.

[2] Historical Fiction is a widely recognized genre, encompassing literature, theatre, and film. For an extensive discussion of the genre, including an annotated "Master List" of writers, one may consult the well-maintained Writers of Historical Fiction Website <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~soon/histfiction/#master> A work such as James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans (1826), adapted for film in 1992, is but one familiar example of Historical Fiction writing.

[3] Again, this is a widely recognized genre, epitomized by a film such as Schindler's List (1993).

The Outsider and Korczak are similar, in that they both confront German audiences with some of the darkest moments in their nation's history. A significant difference, however, is that this 'history' was contemporaneous for Borchert's first audiences, while Sylvanus' original spectators were distanced from it by more than a decade. Borchert was writing in a Germany which still bore the physical wounds of a war lost on its own soil, whereas the wounds of Sylvanus' time were primarily psychological. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, theatre in the postwar German era both reflects Germany's traumatic experience of the war, and offers a forum for its resolution. It is true that other art forms, such as prose, poetry, film, and painting also attempted to mediate the trauma of the War. While I do not discount the merit of such work in these media, theatre offers a powerful means to encounter a past that, in postwar Germany, continued to haunt the present and cloud the future. Above all else, postwar German citizens needed to return to the trauma of World War Two so that they might apprehend the truth of its victims. It is Borchert's and Sylvanus' intention to present this truth, but any art is at best a (re)presentation of reality. Theatre, particularly when it acknowledges itself as said representation, as do both The Outsider and Korczak, overcomes this obstacle by reminding audiences that although they can bear witness to past traumas, they cannot actually experience them through the work of art. Although no art can provide a portal to the traumatic experiences of World War Two, the visceral encounter that theatre provides with these experiences brings postwar audiences as close to the truth of World War Two as it is possible to get. Further, the ephemeral nature of theatre makes drama resilient against the dangers of reification. Rather than providing a stable, and thus authoritative, monument to past trauma, theatre represents fluid memory,

always changing along with those who observe it. *No* narrative alone is enough if we wish to make use of past experiences, but as (scholar) Leon I. Yudkin writes in reference to the relevance of trauma literature:

> This is the point [...] Not that it remains locked in the past, regurgitating identical material, but that it must exist. The past must be part of the present and must constantly be disinterred if we are to come to terms with the present." (Breaking Crystal 175)

Yudkin may be pointing to literature in order to emphasize the fact that historical narratives alone are not enough if we wish to make use of past experiences, but his words ring all the more true in the case of theatre.

The Outsider and Korczak presented a number of significant challenges to their first German audiences, ones which needed to be addressed in order to make resolution possible. In order to understand these challenges, I will look to Trauma Theory as a useful framework with which to analyze post-World War Two German theatre. Originally a tool of clinical psychology, Trauma Theory has in more recent years been utilized by a growing number of scholars, including Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Dori Laub, and Robert Jay Lifton, to understand why it is necessary to return to a traumatic past in order to move beyond it. Psychologists have often focused on the individual's experience of a private trauma, but Trauma Theory as applied to literature looks at the ways in which society as a whole may benefit from a shared return to a shared past. This later application makes Trauma Theory a particularly useful means of understanding why theatre is a desirable forum by which to address Germany's traumatic experience of World War Two. Theatre is an innately communal experience, thus

reminding audiences that the traumas they are witnessing in The Outsider and in Korczak may be individual (*i.e.* those of an individual character in the drama), yet they are also part of a past shared by all of Germany.

I will examine The Outsider and Korczak with respect to the following challenges: first, the characterization of ordinary German citizens (*i.e.* those Germans who were neither Jewish nor a member of any other group actively persecuted, nor a member of the National Socialist Party) as wholly innocent bystanders to Hitler's reign of terror is refuted by these two plays. Borchert and Sylvanus make it uncomfortably clear to audiences that they do not view Hitler as the sole author of Germany's tragic past. Secondly, after emphasizing the fact that most German citizens did have the capacity to make choices during World War Two, The Outsider and Korczak remind such individuals that although they certainly suffered under the Nazi regime, they themselves were not its intended victims. There is a progression in this address of the country's false victim mentality from 1946's The Outsider to 1957's Korczak. The former deals with German soldiers as active agents of their own destruction, while the latter deals with both soldiers and civilians as active agents, or at least complicit observers, of the destruction not only of Germany but also of the Jews. Thirdly, Borchert and Sylvanus force their audiences to return, be it from 1946, from 1957, or from beyond, to Germany's painful past. Audiences also must consider why this return is both necessary and relevant to Germany's present and to its future. Finally, The Outsider and Korczak raise the question of whose responsibility it is to carry out the work of remembering the horrors of World War Two, and bearing witness to its victims. Borchert's and Sylvanus' first audiences had to re-evaluate whether or not the fact that they were neither Jews nor Nazis

absolved them of this responsibility, as they may have wished. Subsequent audiences, including those in present-day North America, must consider whether the fact that they were neither geographically nor temporally present during the War excuses them from the task of witnessing it. I will evaluate the weight of these four central challenges today, not merely for German audiences but for North American ones as well.

As I have stated, these challenges must be addressed if resolution of the trauma of World War Two is to be possible. Given the fact that such address is bound to be painful, we might reasonably ask why such resolution of the past is more desirable than the mere anesthetization which Maier refers to. Here again, Trauma Theory is a useful means of understanding why resolution is not only desirable but necessary. As Caruth suggests in Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History, the trauma attended to by historical narrative is not necessarily the event itself, but rather the ongoing experience of having survived it (7). The German past, then, comprises the German present as well; if resolution of the trauma cannot be achieved, then the country will never move beyond the atrocities of World War Two and onto a more positive future. Along the same lines, theorist Dominick LaCapra writes that:

> One might venture to say that old problems never die, or even fade away. They tend to return as the repressed. Coming to terms with them requires a process of working-through that is cognizant of their role and the possibilities or difficulties it creates for interpretation and for life. (Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma 38)

Returning to the past, painful though it may have been, was precisely the step that Borchert and Sylvanus needed to push Germans to take so that they might embark upon an unencumbered future.

Through a close reading of The Outsider and Korczak, I will illustrate my central thesis: theatre provides an optimal forum for the process of working through the traumatic German experience of World War Two. I have selected these plays for analysis because they also offer insight into the second tenet of my thesis, which is that the theatre of post-World War Two Germany reflects the trauma suffered by the nation. This trauma was both physical, in that the country and its people bore the scars of a war lost on German soil, and psychological, in that its ordinary citizens inherited the fallout of their country's Nazi past. I will demonstrate that 1946's The Outsider both reflects and offers hope primarily for resolution of the physical trauma of World War Two. 1957's Korczak, however, reflects a society that was ready to approach resolution of the psychological trauma of the war as well.

In Chapter One, I will provide a social and historical context for the two plays. This will include a discussion of the traumatic event itself, World War Two, with a special focus on how art became a tool of the Third Reich. Chapter Two will provide an overview of The Outsider and Korczak, covering not merely content but also relevant information regarding playwrights Borchert and Sylvanus, the time period in which each play was written, and a discussion of the plays in performance, in postwar Germany. In Chapter Three, I will focus on Trauma Theory. I will introduce concepts such as stages in the process of resolution, flexible memory, denial of absolute narratives or claims to truth, and will discuss how these may facilitate resolution of past traumas. Following

from this, in Chapter Four, I will apply Trauma Theory to my analysis of The Outsider and Korczak. Finally, in Chapter Five, I will discuss the plays in terms of the progression they represent as the characters move through trauma towards resolution. The analysis of the dramas in Chapters Four and Five will consider content, dramaturgy, and present-day productions of the plays as suited to the points of inquiry. My Conclusion will synthesize the preceding chapters, and will suggest the reasons why The Outsider and Korczak, each written a continent and more than fifty years away from us, merit our continued attention today.

CHAPTER ONE

The Third Reich: Society, Politics, Propaganda, and Art

Hitler's horrific Endlösung, or "Final Solution" is, justifiably, what Germany and the world focus on today in any discussion of the Nazi era. While we must never lose sight of the Holocaust or its victims, we must consider the circumstances that led an entire nation to this pivotal moment in history. As a great deal of scholarship, such as historian Sarah Gordon's 1984 book, Hitler, Germans, and the "Jewish Question," has suggested, the radical, murderous anti-Semitism embodied by Hitler did not represent the views of most German citizens, including those who voted for the National Socialist Party, or even those of many members of the Party itself. The precise reasons that the former group had for their varying degrees of support for Hitler are difficult to pin down, but Gordon examines in detail the motivations of the latter. Drawing upon some 600 autobiographies of early Nazi Party members (a collection assembled in the 1930s by Theodore Abel[4], and reassessed by Peter Merkel[5] in 1975), Gordon shows that at least one-third of the early Party members gave no evidence whatsoever of hating the Jews, and only thirteen percent shared Hitler's "paranoid" Judeophobia. The remaining fifty-plus percent revealed moderately anti-Semitic feelings, but these were not strong enough to represent their primary reasons for joining the party (Gordon 53). Gordon reasonably concludes that ordinary German voters, like the majority of early Nazi party members, likely supported Hitler for reasons that had more to do with the Depression, the perceived threat from Communism, and the breakdown of parliamentary government.

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[4] Theodore Abel, Why Hitler Came to Power: An Answer Based on the Original Life Stories of Six Hundred of His Followers (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1986).

[5] Peter Merkl, Political Violence under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis (New Jersey: Princeton, 1975). This work actually considers 581 biographies.

In short, many Nazi Party leaders simply accepted anti-Semitism as part of the baggage of Nazism, though they were in the bargain for other reasons. One may legitimately speculate that this was also true of the average Party member and voter. According to some historians and some Nazis, acceptance of national-socialist ideology was never uniform, nor did the Nazis intend it to be so. This was perceived quite clearly by the many German socialists who underestimated the danger of anti-Semitism, thinking that only a few racist leaders actually believed what they said about the Jews (Gordon 54). Moderate anti-Semitism could hardly be characterized as a uniquely German phenomenon in the early twentieth century. The Jews' notable economic and political progress after 1870, and their very public presence in certain businesses, professions, and left-wing political parties made them easy scapegoats in the blame-game induced by troubled times.

It may be true that genocide was possible principally because Hitler controlled a ruthlessly totalitarian system and acted under cover of war, but this does not exonerate ordinary German citizens from the role they played in his Pyrrhic victory. Much recent scholarship on the issue, both in general literature and in academia, has focused on the public support that vaulted Hitler to his dangerous position. In his highly controversial 1996 tome, Hitler's Willing Executioners, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen argues the extreme position that "eliminationist anti-Semitism" was a long-standing peculiarity of German culture to which the Nazi regime simply gave free rein. This genocidal mentality was not limited to Germany. In many occupied countries, such as Lithuania and the Ukraine, local non-German militias did the work of killing Jews, with or without German

supervision. Goldhagen's central thesis is that the Holocaust was the inevitable culmination of widespread German enthusiasm for killing the Jews:

> By the eve of the First World War, a discourse—namely a discussion structured by a stable framework with widely accepted reference points, images, and explicit elaborations—had for over thirty years been in place with regard to the Jews. [...] The German discourse in some sense had at its foundation the extremely widespread, virtually axiomatic notion that a "*Judenfrage*," a "Jewish Problem," existed. [...] Because of the Jews' presence, a serious problem existed in Germany. Responsibility for this problem lay with the Jews, not the Germans. [...] This axiomatic belief in the existence of the "Jewish Problem," more or less promised an axiomatic belief in the need to "eliminate" Jewishness from Germany as the "problem's" only "solution." (80)

In marked contrast to Gordon's suggestion that anti-Semitism was an unpopular sidebar to National Socialist policies which appealed to Germans for other reasons, Goldhagen writes "The centrality of anti-Semitism in the Party's worldview, program, and rhetoric—if in a more elaborated and avowedly violent form—mirrored the sentiments of German culture" (85). According to Goldhagen, Hitler's anti-Semitism may not have been the only reason that Germany supported the Nazis, but it was one of the Party's most powerful drawing cards.

While they note the contribution that Goldhagen has made to their own thesis, Adam LeBor and Roger Boyes (Seduced By Hitler, 2001) make the more moderate claim that:

> It could never be said, even in the darkest days, that there were no choices. There was always choice. [...] rarely between unambiguous good and hell-scorching evil,

but it was always possible to deliberate on a problem and settle on the least detrimental course. (2)

The majority of academic writing that has fallen on Goldhagen's and LeBor/Boyes' side of the debate has tended to make arguments similar to the latter. Under this model, German citizens are no longer characterized as powerless and unwitting pawns in Hitler's increasingly psychotic rule, but they are also not considered his truly willing executioners. Increasingly, Germans have been viewed not as proponents of the Final Solution, but as a nation that did, out of self-interest, turn a blind eye to the potentially horrific outcome of the more moderate Nazi policies that they had embraced in the early years of the regime:

> Hitler accelerated politics and planned and realized factories, motorways, extravagantly huge buildings, and architectural follies within a few short years. The sense of speed blurred the sense of choice. To say "no" was to step in the way of progress. (LeBor and Boyes 20)

No respectable author has suggested that Hitler's eventual victims—Jews, leftists, Roma, and others who did not embody Hitler's ideal German (*i.e.* the disabled, and homosexuals)—were in a position to make such a choice. Perhaps in fear that they themselves would become the targets of the Third Reich, the German middle-class were often inclined to permit such treatment of their countrymen. For the middle class German citizen, perceived short term self-interests would seem at times to have taken the place of broader social and ethical concerns. Such citizens did not necessarily say "yes" to murder, nor did they say "no" to the regime that eventually committed it. This choice, which may be better characterized as a painfully clear lack of *exercising* choice, is the

action to which conscience demands that ordinary German citizens return in the wake of World War Two.

The Nazi choice, admittedly, was attractively presented. Germans were presented with "a vision of the modern, a dream of technological perfection. The dream was marketed, packaged, and sold: the seducer's art was also the persuader's science" (LeBor and Boyes 20). Following the crash of the Weimar Republic, Germans wanted *something*, and Nazism acted as lightning rod to crystallize this free-floating desire into something concrete: "A voice takes over a set of images (the voice of Hitler, say)" (Deleuze, Negotiations, 42). An organization so efficient that it has been nicknamed the "Goebbels Machine," the Ministry for Enlightenment and Propaganda ran under the directorship of Dr. Josef Goebbels from 1933 until 1945. The Ministry was committed to building a cult of personal loyalty to both Hitler (der Führer) and to the German Fatherland (das Vaterland). Highly intelligent, Goebbels favoured subtler, psychologically based means of enticement over some of Hitler's cruder means when it came to indoctrinating the German public.[6] Various forms of art—radio, theatre cinema, posters, and other visual media—were particularly attractive to Goebbels. Hitler, too,

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[6] I do not mean to suggest here that Hitler was a barbarian who oafishly believed that forceful indoctrination was the best way to captivate his public. As Francois Tremblay suggests in The Hitler Complex (article published 1 Oct. 2000, at <http://www.suite101.com>), the themes Hitler espoused in his frequent public addresses—hope for a better future, nationalist fervor, racism, and the desire to control others—are deep-seated in the human psyche. Hitler did not talk about objectivity or reason, but bypassed reason in order to touch the psycho-epistemology of the people to whom he spoke. We see this tactic used to a lesser extent today by politicians and public figures—with appeals to nationalist pride, and subjective taste. One's psycho-epistemology is the most powerful motor to action—and Hitler understood as much in Mein Kampf : "[t]he people, in an overwhelming majority, are so feminine in their nature and attitude that their activities and thoughts are motivated less by sober consideration than by feeling and sentiment" (237). As the Third Reich progressed, however, we can see this psychological approach overshadowed time and time again by Hitler's increasingly blatant hatred of the Jews. If relatively early propaganda films, such as Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will, show Goebbels' steadier hand in terms of manipulation of the public, later films, like The Eternal Jew, point to a time when Goebbels was no longer able to rein in Hitler's violent will so effectively. I discuss both the tone and the implications of these two films later in this chapter.

knew the power of artistic expression; it is no small irony that the future Führer traced his own anti-Semitism to the Jewish cultural influences in Vienna, which he felt were "worse than the Black Death" (Mein Kampf 54).[7] He also realized the stakes of mass media, commenting "Without automobiles, films, and radios, there is no victory for National Socialism" (qtd. by Stark 39).

However effective, Nazi control of the above media was by no means absolute. World War Two scholars disagree upon the extent of domination; George E. Wellwarth claims that "under the dictatorship which existed in Germany during the twelve-year cultural hiatus of the Nazi regime no creative artistic work was possible" (ix), while Hans Dieter Schäfer says that "the stereotyped view of Nazi Germany as a flawless system of indoctrinating repression and complete ideological penetration of the whole country and of every aspect of life is false, as newspapers, magazines, diaries, films, record sales, etc. show"(qtd. in English by Siefken 180).[8] The question of National Socialism's impact upon Germany's *theatres* is particularly controversial. In "National Socialism and German Literature," author Hinrich Siefken criticizes the tendency to throw away as "dubious," or no more than propagandistic and/or heavily censored work, anything associated with the 1933-1945 period (177).

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[7] Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim, p.54. In Theatre Under the Nazis, John London says that the theatre that young Hitler encountered in Vienna's Kaiserjubiläums-Stadttheater from 1906 to 1913, under the directorship of Rainer Simons, was committed to an anti-Semitic policy, and that racism was a "potent cultural force" in the city at that time. It was in Vienna that Hitler "saw the Wagner productions and the technical tricks of stagecraft which would influence his aesthetic concerns for the rest of his life" (London 3).

[8] Original attributed to Hans Dieter Schäfer, Deutsche Kulturk und Lebenswirkichkeit 1933-1945 (114).

A number of prominent playwrights, including Ernst Toller, Carl Zuckmayer, and Bertolt Brecht either chose emigration or accepted forced exile,[9] Toller to England and Switzerland, Zuckmayer to the United States, and Brecht to Scandinavia and eventually to America. However undesirable that emigration may have been, it struck them as preferable to life under a dictatorship. Playwrights who stayed risked the fate of colleague Erich Mühsam, who was imprisoned in a concentration camp, where he was killed in 1934, if they revealed strong ideological opposition to Nazi rule. However, as John London points out in Theatre Under the Nazis, a number of well-known personalities were able to stay and work in Germany after 1933: actors Gustaf Gründgens, Heinrich George, and Bernhard Minetti, set designer Caspar Neher, and director Erich Engel (a close associate of Brecht in the 1920s) all prospered. Playwright Gerhart Hauptmann, one of the founders of German Naturalism, and composer Richard Strauss—artists whose work during the Nazi years became entrenched in the canon—also remained in the country (2).

If any consensus can be reached regarding theatre under the Third Reich, it would seem to be this: artists who expressed definitively anti-Nazi views were forced to do so in exile; those whose views—at least insofar as they emerged in their work—remained less antithetical to the Party were relatively free to continue to create. This latter group did not necessarily support the regime. Although he lived and wrote in Germany until his death of natural causes in 1946, Hauptmann reportedly told a friend that his time had

[9] The choice of terminology here—"emigration" versus "exile" is a contentious issue. In the words of Bertolt Brecht: "The name they have coined us—*emigrants*—is fundamentally erroneous since this was not a voluntary migration for the purpose of finding an alternative place to settle. The emigrants found themselves not a new homeland but a place of refuge in exile until the storm passes—Deportees, that's what we are, outcasts" (quoted in Yad Vashem online). Ernst Toller's "emigration" in 1933 followed the Nazis revocation of his German citizenship, and the banning and/or burning of his works that same year.

"ended with the burning of the Reichstag." The final phase of his dramatic work, the Die Atriden-Tetralogie cycle of plays (1941-7),[10] revealed a veiled horror at the cruelty of his own time through allusion to Greek tragedy. Hauptmann kept his views on the Third Reich largely private, though, and the tolerance of artistic viewpoints like his that were not designed to rock the political boat is indicative of the "officially tolerated pluralism of a system which liked to present itself to others as monolithic, but offered for a time and under certain conditions areas of escape" (Siefken 177). Further, even if freedom of expression was limited in the theatres of this era, theatre remained relatively untouched by the Goebbels Machine. Those who trod the German boards were not permitted to use them as a platform for social change, but they were also not forced to become the exclusive mouthpieces of National Socialist policy.

Theatre's relative autonomy may be attributed to the fact that it was not, in the Western Europe of the time, a particularly powerful mode of expression. Drama was still generally regarded as an entertaining diversion rather than socio-political forum. Radio was the mass medium for providing information, as well as entertainment, in the years leading up to and during the Second World War. Radio as entertainment was exploited in Germany, where traditional music, performed by stars like Marlene Dietrich, was used to reinforce national pride. "Entertainment" radio was also used to broadcast more blatant propaganda, in the form of English-language talks designed to foster Nazi sympathy in Britain.[11] The informational—and *dis*informational—potential of radio under the Third

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[10] To the best of my knowledge, the dates for Die Atriden-Tetralogie (1941-7) indicate the period of time over which the work was published in completion. Obviously, the writing was completed by 1946 at the latest, as Hauptmann died 6 June 1946. See Wiesenthal MLCO for dates.

[11] The Nazi party broadcast a series of talks hosted by sympathizer William Joyce, affectionately nicknamed "Lord Haw-Haw" because he was a caricature of a proper English upper-classman. Although

Reich cannot be underestimated either, but a more thorough discussion of this is beyond the scope of this study.

Following the 1919 inception of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazi Party), vitriolic statements by the government equated the "atonal chaos" of modern music with Bolshevism, and declared that German culture was being threatened by "international Jewish influences." The 1920 Nazi Party Program demanded "legal prosecution of all those tendencies in art and literature which corrupt our national life," and the "suppression of cultural events which violate this demand" (London 5). In 1919 and 1920, such complaints did not necessarily carry much weight. While the far-right National Socialist Party voice had begun to enter German political discourse in these years, the Party did not actually come to power until January 1933, with Hitler becoming German Chancellor in April of that year. However, even if their influence in 1919 and 1920 was slight, the degree to which Nazi policies dictated German culture increased markedly over the next two decades, as the Party rose in power. On 19 July 1937, this influence reached a tangible culmination with the opening of Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art). An official Nazi art (or, one might say, anti-art) exhibition, Entartete Kunst was the ultimate display of Hitler's and Goebbels' intent to purge the Reich of all remaining modern art from German public and private collections. By the Nazi's own contention, the exhibition was designed to ridicule and degrade all creative works that did not uphold correct National Socialist virtues.

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these were less subtle than the indirect approach of music, they still successfully masqueraded as entertainment rather than indoctrination (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

Whatever autonomy German theatre may have retained during the critical period of Nazi rule from 1933 to 1945, at least one trend in censorship remained consistent throughout these years and can, in fact, be noted as early as 1919. Right-wing groups such as the Bühnenvolksbund (People's Theatre League) organized public campaigns against the "outrages" of Expressionism and other contemporary styles of drama. By claiming that these theatrical influences were dangerously "un-German," the Bühnenvolksbund, like Goebbels, tapped into the country's desire for a strong national identity (London 5). Following World War Two, writers often turned consciously to the techniques and genres that had been censored as early as 1919 and 1929, and banned under the Third Reich. In employing the various influences of Expressionism, alienation, and metatheatricality, both The Outsider and Korczak are emphatically contemporary in their dramaturgy. This greatly contributes to The Outsider and Korczak's maximization of theatre's potential to address significant social issues.

Cinema, too, played a key role in Goebbel's assault on the German conscience. Two of the most noteworthy films of the National Socialist era, director Leni Riefenstahl's 1934 documentary Trimph des Willens (Triumph of the Will), and the 1940 Goebbels-produced Der ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew), both of which were tolerated by the German public, reveal the increasingly anti-Semitic position of the Nazi Party. In 1934, as the National Socialist Party was still strengthening its base among the German public—many of whom, as I have discussed earlier in this Chapter, may have supported the Party for reasons that had little or nothing to do with the Jews—film was a useful tool because it was a non-confrontational way in which the German people could be galvanized around a nationalistic message. Images such as Riefenstahl's opening shot of

a smiling, waving Hitler disembarking from a silver plane in Nuremberg gave that message a face, and solidified public trust in the Nazi leader. The iconography itself elevated Riefenstahl's carefully choreographed image of Hitler to a level of almost heroic mythology; in a troubled Germany, he represented a mythic saviour poised to return the nation to its past glory. In 1940, Hitler needed to rally the German people around his own increasingly violent hatred of the Jews, and once again turned to the visual medium of film. Much as Triumph of the Will had given Hitler's face to the future of Germany, The Eternal Jew tried to promote filthy sewer rats as the face of the Jews. The film is often called an X-ray into the development of more rabid anti-Semitic feeling, within both the Nazi party and the German public. At a recent conference (1997), eminent scholar Stig Hornshøj-Møller said:

> I consider the Nazi propaganda film "*Der ewige Jude*" to be an X-ray of the Holocaust decision-making process itself. [...] Film historians have always interpreted this film as a deliberate call for the Holocaust. To quote Erwin Leiser, it should "turn brave citizens into willing mass-murderers." [12]

Even if ordinary Germans did not become Leiser's "willing mass-murderers," or Goldhagen's "willing executioners", they did, as I have argued earlier in this chapter, turn a blind eye to the force of Hitler's hatred of the Jews. The prize that such citizens *did* have their eyes on may have been economic and political stability, or the return of national pride, but it is thanks to Goebbels, and films like Triumph of the Will and The

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[12] Hornshøj-Møller, Stig. 'The Role of "Produced Reality" in the Decision-Making Process Which Led to the Holocaust.' Paper presented at the conference "Genocide and the Modern World," Association of Genocide Scholars, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, June 11-13, 1997.

Eternal Jew that Hitler became the face of this set of desires, while Jews came to embody the obstacle to achieving them.

The contribution of propaganda to the Final Solution is evident in the 1961 testimony of Kurt Möbius, a former police battalion member who served in Chelmno:

> I would also like to say that it did not at all occur to me that these orders could be unjust. It is true that I know that it is also the duty of the police to protect the innocent, but I was then of the conviction that the Jews were not innocent but guilty. I believed the propaganda that all Jews were criminals and subhumans and that they were the cause of Germany's decline after the First World War. The thought that one should disobey or evade the order to participate in the extermination of the Jews did not therefore enter my mind at all.
>
> (Goldhagen 179)

Möbius' words are to some extent, of course, merely a variation on the "I was just obeying my orders" defense, but they have been of interest to historians seeking to understand how so many Germans, many of whom, as I have discussed earlier, possessed no inborn anti-Semitic feelings, could have accepted National Socialist policies. The testimony of Möbius and other ordinary German citizens suggests that anti-Jewish propaganda was a key factor in determining their own behaviour. If we believe such claims, then it would appear as though Goebbels was successful in producing a "Genocidal Mentality" in at least some Germans. This does not pardon the actions of citizens like Möbius, but if such individuals are to deal now with the choices they made then, they certainly have the right to examine any factors that may mitigate their guilt.

As Professors Robert Jay Lifton and Eric Markusen argue, "Genocidal Mentality" is a necessary precondition for actual genocidal behaviour (Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust & Nuclear Threat 15).

Scholars of World War Two are just now beginning to understand fully the enormous power of the Goebbels Machine, but its effectiveness seems to have been understood by the Allies all along. The Allies also fought a psychological war alongside their military efforts. Militarily, the Allies targeted Germany's physical landscape, destroying buildings, bodies, and even entire cities. Their psychological tactics were aimed at destroying German citizens' morale, and at weakening the German pride Goebbels sought to engender. F.A. Lindemann, science advisor to Winston Churchill, gave a simple rationale for Britain's murderous air war against German civilians: the goal was to destroy German morale. Similarly, Soviet propagandist Ilya Ehrenburg exhorted Red Army soldiers to take rapacious revenge, not only against the German army, but against non-combatant Germans as well. V-E Day marked the official freeing of Germany from the influence of Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda; it also marked the beginning of a new, and no less aggressive, wave of indoctrination conducted by America, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union.[13] Espousing the seemingly universal values of peace and equality, these 'liberators' were in fact attempting to replace the German way of life with their own. The so-called "three D's" (de-Nazification, de-militarization, de-cartelization) were touted as relief from the stranglehold of Nazism, but came at a price. Many German nationalists, who had clearly not been Nazi

[13] Ideological differences emerged among the victorious nations during this period of "re-educating" Germany, and while the American voice tended to dominate at first, these international disputes would later spawn the Cold War.

sympathizers,[14] had their careers or even their lives ruined by the American military occupiers' overzealous attempts to replace not just Hitler's, but peace time Germany's ideology as well, with their own. Historiography became a military matter. Although it is a cliché, it is worth remembering that the victors are the ones who get to write history. Even though the assault of tanks and bombs was over, Germany's national consciousness remained under siege. The arts were, as I have shown in this chapter, an effective tool of coercion in the hands of the Third Reich, and, subsequently, an effective means by which to exert and maintain postwar Allied control. In the hands of postwar playwrights Borchert and Sylvanus, I will show how art was also an effective means by which to reclaim and rebuild a German identity, and thereby approach a resolution of Germany's traumatic past.

[14] Playwright Gerhart Hauptmann, whose private abhorrence of Nazism I have discussed earlier, was one such individual. American authorities initially banned his works from their sector in West Berlin, alleging that Hauptmann had acquiesced to the regime.

CHAPTER TWO

The Plays: an Overview of Draußen vor der Tür *(*The Outsider*) and* Korczak und die Kinder *(*Dr. Korczak and the Children*)*

As I am examining the ways in which post-World War Two German theatre reflects society's progress in dealing with the traumatic experience of the War, it is significant that The Outsider and Korczak were written some eleven years apart. Completed in 1946, Borchert's drama premiered as a radio play in February 1947, and moved to the Hamburg Kammerspiele stage in November of that same year. Although English-language scholarship (*i.e.* Benedikt and Wellwarth) suggests that the seeds of Sylvanus' drama may have been germinating for quite some time, Korczak did not appear, either on stage or in print, until 1957. I am interested in the role Borchert and Sylvanus played, as artists, in helping Germany deal with its traumatic past. To this end, I have included some biographical information regarding each playwright, to better illuminate the impact each man had upon contemporaneous Germany, as well as on the theatre of succeeding eras. Finally, I will consider critical reception of The Outsider and of Korczak in post-War Germany. While my concern in this thesis is not with the rebuilding of Germany following World War Two, it is worth noting that the process had barely begun in 1946, a mere year after the nation's defeat. The Germany in which Wolfgang Borchert lived and wrote, then, had emerged from the war primarily in a historical and ideological sense, but its physical landscape had not yet regained any sense of normalcy. During the war, the Allies dropped over two million tons of bombs on Germany; hard-hit cities such as Hamburg, Essen, Berlin, and Dresden had far from recovered. Along with architectural desecration, the physical landscape of Germany was fractured spatially. The new political hegemony was made tangible in the German

landscape. Following Germany's unconditional surrender to the Allies, it ceased to exist as an autonomous state. The Allies had previously agreed to partition Germany into three zones of occupation—a large Soviet zone in the east, a British zone in the Northwest, and an American zone in the Southwest. The divisive politics of this new Germany are beyond the scope of this study, but there can be no question that following the war, the nation was no more than a fragmented shadow of its prideful Nazi era self.

Borchert takes this erasure of prewar Germany as the starting point for his play, both structurally and thematically. Theorist Theodor Adorno has famously argued that "to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Adorno, The Essential Frankfurt School Reader 312). Though much has been read into this statement, one key point is that following the incomprehensible horror, it seems inhumane to continue to believe that every event ultimately serves some divine purpose, or that we should look for meaning in things, including art. As scholar George Steiner writes:

> On a collective, historical scale, Auschwitz would signal the *death of man* as a rational, "forward dreaming" speech-organism (the *zoon phonanta*) of Greek philosophy). The languages we are now speaking on this polluted and suicidal planet are "post-human." They are serving creatures less than man. They are loud with emptiness [...] Where the language is still humane, in the root sense of that word, it is being spoken by survivors, remembrances, and ghosts. [...] Eloquence after Auschwitz would be a kind of obscenity. ("The Long Life of Metaphor" 156)

The teleological structure, and implied production of meaning, of most prewar Western literature is drawn into question. From a structural standpoint, the question is whether or not artists can return to cause-and-effect master narratives.

Before the play-proper begins, Borchert has included three segments: lengthy stage directions written in prose, a 'Prologue,' and an episode entitled 'The Dream.' In the first of these, two full paragraphs of stage directions describe a scene possibly to be presented in tableaux: "A man comes home to Germany. And there he sits through rather an astonishing piece of film. He has to pinch his arm continually during the performance, because he doesn't know whether he's waking or sleeping" (53). In the following two-and-a-half page (Benedikt trans.) Prologue, 'God'—aka 'The Old Man in whom no one believes anymore'—engages in a Faustian debate[15] with death, here hypostatized as the 'Undertaker.' Finally, in 'The Dream,' a somnolent protagonist, 'Beckmann,' argues with the spirit of the river Elbe, which has just rejected his suicide.

The first of these three episodes, the exposition, brings the audience into the dramatic space. The man of the opening stage directions is "one of many" (53); we are meant to view him as an archetypal figure rather than as an individual personality. Not only does this man represent "many" within the world of the play, he is meant to represent us in the audience as well. Some scholars have interpreted the "man" to be Beckmann, but my assertion is based upon the following reasoning: First, although the man initially believes that he is dreaming, he concludes that he is awake when "he notices to the right and the left of him other people all living through the same experience" (53). This description evokes, for me, the play's first theatrical audience (21 November 1947,

[15] Numerous scholars have noted the similarity of Borchert's Prologue to the 'Prologue in Heaven' of Goethe's Faust: "There is a prologue, which resembles in concept, if not in execution, the prologue in Goethe's Faust, depicting the encounter between God and the devil" (Fickert 35).

Hamburger Kammerspiele). Secondly, we are introduced to Beckmann by name shortly thereafter, in 'The Dream,' where he is clearly *not* cognizant, as the man has determined himself to be.[16] We thus become not merely observers of the drama, but participants.

In the next episode, the Prologue, The Outsider is placed in a superhuman context, reinforcing its metatheatrical structure. The presence of a divine spectator—God, or the Old Man in whom no one believes anymore—establishes a second audience, beyond the one sitting in the theatre. This God is watching the events taking place in the play's secular world. Death (aka the Undertaker) observes him "just standing there and crying" (54) over the suicide attempt he has witnessed. When we meet Beckmann, we realize that he is the one for whom God has cried. Because God is clearly watching the drama that the expositional stage directions have made us a part of, we, as an audience, realize that we are not only spectators but potentially are spectatees as well. Divine observers, *i.e.* God and Death, establish a hierarchy; as humans, we in the audience may well be characters to them, just as Beckmann *et al.* are characters to us. Finally, The Dream further distances the action of the play from reality, suggesting that the drama is being played out not only in the comparatively real setting of the theatre, but in Beckmann's unconsciousness.

The Outsider's highly successful German premiere indicates that this feeling of alienation, and loss of meaning, resonated with post-world War Two audiences. Draußen vor der Tür was originally broadcast as a radio play by Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunk, 13 February 1947; it received its stage premiere at Hamburger Kammerspiele, 21 November

[16] A production of the play which I attended in Oberlin, Ohio (see Chapter Four for complete production information) lent credence to my interpretation. In this production, the actor playing Beckmann emerged from a seat in the audience and stepped onstage in a daze after looking at, and touching the arms of, the patrons seated around him.

1947. Following the success of the latter, the play received a second German production in the same year, followed by thirty-one new productions (in numerous German cities, as well as Zurich) in 1948, and eleven new productions (in numerous German cities, as well as Vienna, and New York) in 1949.[17] The exact numbers of productions of Draußen vor der Tür as a radio drama during this time are less well documented, but while alluding to "additional productions of the play broadcast by radio stations in Germany and abroad" (155), Burgess specifies only a broadcast on BBC Third Program (29 November 1948), which was repeated twice. Critical reception of the work is strongly indicative of the impact the piece had upon these first audiences.

The dominant interpretation of The Outsider is as a voice of "outrage." Wellwarth characterizes the drama as:

> [...] a passionate rejection of all that young Germans were taught, a graphic and mercilessly unrestrained excoriation of the sinister and diabolic system that had destroyed Germany so completely, both morally and physically. Borchert and his compatriots returned to a Germany that truly reflected the vision of Jarry's nihilistic "Savage God," *Père Ubu*: "We have not destroyed everything if we do not destroy even the ruins!" (xii)

Inherent in such analyses of the drama is the belief that Beckmann represents the youth of postwar Germany, many of whom had experienced his return to a 'home' that had ceased to exist. Draußen vor der Tür's first critics often received the work as Borchert's own cry of outrage at what young Germans had experienced, and what they had returned to. Broadcaster Ernst Schnabel prefaced the 1947 radio premiere by saying, "Hier spricht die

[17] various sources, incl. G.J.A. Burgess, German Life and Letters 38:4 Jan. 1985, 155.

Jugend."[18] Early German audiences agreed with this assessment: "Ja, das war sie ja, die Wahrheit, die furchtbare Wahrheit, ungeschminckt und nackt. Ein Schrei aus der Not, unsere Not."[19]

A related trend in scholarship on this play has been to identify protagonist Beckmann as the embodiment of Borchert himself. Many have noted the ties binding character and creator, and have included the fact that Borchert's uncle suffered an injury similar to that of the one-legged husband who haunts Beckmann (Warkentin 17), as well as the fact that Borchert had a close friend by the name of Beckmann (Fickert 34), and the fact that Borchert himself had been raised in a Nazi society. Wellwarth goes so far as to say that Beckmann is "obviously an alter ego for the author" (xii). While a biographical approach to the analysis of The Outsider is of limited use, the similarities between Borchert and his protagonist do signal one important thing: by creating a character whom audiences, as he had to realize, would identify with himself, Borchert reveals his own belief in the fact that theatre was a suitable forum for addressing the issues facing postwar German citizens. Thanks to his parents, Borchert grew up having "access to influential people within Hamburg's elite" (Warkentin 17). Given this privileged position, we can presume that Borchert had some freedom when it came to choosing his desired mode of expression, and that he had been exposed to platforms such as the political or philosophical treatise. Even if we attribute his rejection of these as due to the fact that creative writing seemed best suited to his natural talents, a look at his oeuvre shows that most of his compositions were either poems or short stories. Although

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[18][Here the youth speaks.] Quoted by Carole I. Aippersbach (35), who cites Helmut Gumtau, Wolfgang Borchert. Berlin: Colloquium, 1969 (70).

[19][Yes, that's what it was, the truth, the terrible truth, unvarnished and naked. A cry of distress, our distress.] (my trans.) *ibid.* (36), attributed to listeners' letters quoted by Bernd M. Kraske, " 'Draußen vor der Tür': Anmerkungen zur Hörspiel-Rezeption."

he was not primarily a playwright,[20] Draußen vor der Tür is widely considered Borchert's masterpiece, and it has certainly proven his most enduring work. It cannot be proven conclusively that Borchert wrote The Outsider as a play because he *knew* that it was here that his words would have the greatest impact, but whatever his reasons may have been, this has proven to be the case. In Chapters Four and Five, I shall discuss in greater detail why theatre is a particularly effective medium for Borchert's message.

Before considering the ways in which The Outsider has endured, I will examine its initial reception in postwar Germany.[21] As indicated by the frequency of productions of the work during this decade, the play was certainly successful in terms of reaching a broad audience base. However, early critical reception of Draußen vor der Tür was, at best, mixed. At one extreme, Bernard Meyer-Marwitz called the staged version of radio play Draußen vor der Tür a "catharsis for those returning from the war," and elevated Borchert "to the stature of spokesman for an entire generation."[22] At the other, Hans Egon Holthusen suggests that "every member of the audience with a healthy understanding of humanity and art must admit that a Heimkehrer like Beckmann does not exist, and that in this play one finds an incomplete talent."[23] In Holthusen's view, "Beckmann" is pure fiction, and implausible at that, and thus not a powerful voice in the

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[20] While Draußen vor der Tür is unquestionably Borchert's most significant contribution to the dramatic canon, and is his only play to have received either publication or production during his lifetime, it is not his only drama. In 1938, at the age of seventeen, Borchert composed Yorick der Narr, a play about the life and death of Yorick (the character from Shakespeare's Hamlet whose skull Hamlet contemplates in a famous soliloquy). He also wrote Granvella. Der schwarze Kardinal, and Käse. Die Komödie des Menschen. So far as I have been able to determine, these three dramas remain unpublished, and exist only in manuscript form in the Borchert archive in Hamburg.

[21] For my purposes in this study, I have considered 1946-1960 as the postwar German era. I concede that this may be challengeable from a number of perspectives, but it is logical here given that the plays I am considering span the late 1940s through the late 1950s.

[22] Meyer-Marwitz, Bernhard. 'Nachwort.' Das Gesamtwerk. ed. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1949. 385-420. Translated and paraphrased by Warkentin, 4.

[23] Holthusen, Hans E. 'Über den sauren Kitsch.' Ja und Nein. Munich: Piper Verlag, 1954. 240-48. Translated and paraphrased by Warkentin, 5.

landscape of postwar Germany. In his introduction to David Porter's 1952 translation of the play, Stephen Spender opines that Borchert's writings are "those of a man who sees hardly a day before his time or beyond it, and for whom a world outside his own experiences seems completely shut off [...] Borchert's temoinage [sic] is no more useful to us than the adage that if wishes were horses, beggars would ride" (v). Despite his harsh words, Holthusen goes on to note that Borchert's play "does more than simply entertain an audience for two hours, because its purpose is to free the individual of any 'illusions' he or she might have had."[24] Holthusen's latter comment may explain the reaction that Draußen vor der Tür received from early German audiences and reviewers. Even those who saw the play's merit—and the sheer number of productions it received in the postwar era suggest that there must have been many who did—did not necessarily enjoy the experience of the play itself. An overwhelming majority of responses to Draußen vor der Tür emphasize its bleak, chaotic, and even hopeless outlook on postwar Germany. In "A World of Nothing," William P. Clancy says that Borchert's work can "best be defined as an *Aufschrei*: 'an anguished commentary on a world of nothing.'"[25] As Holthusen says, the play strips away any "illusions" that audiences might have of Germany's ability to regain any prewar sense of normalcy. It is, as in the words I quoted earlier, the unvarnished truth, and a cry of distress. Even Spender's scathing assessment of Borchert as a writer unable to see the world beyond his own immediate experiences is indicative of the uncomfortable admiration many postwar Germans had for Draußen vor der Tür. The play *is* limited, in that the world it portrays is almost unbearably recognizable as the reality facing Germans immediately following the War. However,

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[24] *ibid.*
[25] Clancy, William P. "A World of Nothing," Commonweal 56.3. (1952): 76. Quoted in Aippersbach 37.

this limitation is precisely the play's strength. Draußen vor der Tür is an uncompromisingly honest revelation of truths that postwar German citizens may not have been ready to face in 1946: that a return to the Germany they had known before the war was no longer possible, and that they themselves bore at least some of the responsibility for their country's ruin.

Meyer-Marwitz praised Borchert as the voice of his generation; Spender criticized him for his inability to be anything but this voice. Each of these positions, as well as The Outsider's success in terms of number of productions, reveals the highly personal connection postwar German audiences felt with Beckmann and his uneasy journey. A retrospective look at The Outsider makes it easy for us to see how and why 1946 Germany may have been the right time and place for the play to have a genuine impact upon audiences. However, even if The Outsider succeeded in 1946 as a piece of theatre that addressed significant issues, we must ask whether the same holds true for Borchert's play today. If the surreal landscape Beckmann traverses struck a chord with postwar German audiences because they recognized its emptiness all too well, can that same landscape appeal to us today as anything more than a stylistic flourish? In other words, can a twenty-first century audience see beyond The Outsider's merit as a work of art, and appreciate the play as a work of intervention? Are we still both mesmerized and repulsed by Beckmann's monumental journey 'home'? Alternatively, has the erstwhile voice of a generation faded into that of just another tragic hero? In Chapter Four, I will discuss a 2003 production of Borchert's play which I was fortunate enough to attend; the success of this production in conveying Beckmann's transience to a North American audience

that had not experienced the turmoil of postwar Germany first-hand makes a convincing case for the durability of The Outsider.

Not surprisingly, the challenges facing Erwin Sylvanus in 1957 were very different than those that confronted Borchert in 1946. Rather than being a subject too close for comfort, as it had been in 1946, by 1957 World War Two was almost too remote a matter for a German wishing to write a relevant play. This distance was illusory, of course—in 1957 Germany was not nearly so far removed from its Nazi past as many might have hoped—[26] but the effects of time on the national psyche were tangible:

> Demonstrating a moral resiliency so extraordinary that it might be called a national characteristic, the Germans lapsed into a comfortable, even self-congratulatory, complacency and adopted a Pilate-like attitude of pseudopious and rather offended innocence. The dramatists and other responsible intellectuals of postwar Germany, many of them returned exiles, were horrified by the rapidity with which their countrymen had succeeded in repressing all consciousness of their guilt or transferring it to the dead. (Wellwarth xvi)

Whereas German audiences of Borchert's time may have been uncomfortable with the connections between their lives and the world portrayed in The Outsider, those of Sylvanus' time had to be forcibly reminded that such connections even existed. In order to implicate audiences in 1957 in an era that they had tried to forget, Sylvanus turned to

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[26] It has been suggested that Adolf Eichmann's 1960 trial in Israel, and resultant execution in 1961, was perhaps the first time that the citizens of Germany could truly begin to put this past behind them. The Eichmann trial revealed to many Germans and certainly to the world, for the first time, the sheer magnitude and horror of the Third Reich. See also my comments in Fn. 52 regarding the necessity of time in becoming cognizant of such trauma.

the dramatic methods of Luigi Pirandello. In conjunction with my discussion of art, reality, and trauma in Chapter Four, I will detail the Italian playwright's influence on Sylvanus' play. For now, suffice it to say that like Pirandello, Sylvanus desired a dramaturgy that would cause audiences to question whether or not their own world was really separate from the staged world of the play.

Early in Korczak, the actor characters complain that they want to perform a "real" play, such as Hamlet. Sylvanus does draw upon established dramatic techniques, most notably those of Pirandello, but also those of Brecht and the Russian Formalist School; his aim is to encourage a critical space between the audience and the play, and to emphasize the fact that what the audience is watching is indeed just a play. Despite these stylistic influences, Sylvanus has no use for real plays, or recognizable narratives; the artistic qualities of his theatre are presented as no more than a means to an end. Telling the story of Dr. Korczak is what is important here, and the actors and stage are merely the tools that Sylvanus (himself speaking in Korczak through the narrator) needs to make that happen:

> NARRATOR: But I explained what the play is all about before you came. It's about Janusz Korczak, about a Jew who's supposed never to have told a lie.
>
> SECOND ACTOR: A problem play, in other words!
>
> ACTRESS: Probably the audience won't even be allowed to applaud. It'll be so solemn we won't be able to act. [...]
>
> NARRATOR: We're not talking about a play any more now. [...] We're talking about a man—a man named Janusz Korczak. We're not dealing with any

> made-up plots here; we're dealing with reality. [...] None of you will be playing a part. You are the actor... (*Each time he gives the actor's real name.*) and you are the actor...and you are the actress...and that's what you'll remain all the way through. No make-up and no costumes, either. (119)

As the Narrator has said, there are no "made-up plots here," and this is somewhat true. Dr. Janusz Korczak (1878-1942) was actually born Henryk Goldszmit, into a middle-class Jewish family in Warsaw, Poland. A pediatrician by training, the Doctor passed up a potentially lucrative international career so that he might devote himself to the poor and orphaned children of Poland:

> Parallel to his decision to take engagement for these children and deciding himself against middle-class life and career he changed his name to Janusz Korczak. The pseudonym was taken from him [sic] by a favored novel of the 19th century by J. I. Krazewski about `Janasz Korczak and the pretty Swordsweeperlady´. The Printer by mistake changed Janasz to Janusz and so he left that so. From 1911 Korczak guided the orphan-house `Dom Sierot´ which was created by his plans. Here he developed as result [sic] of the reflected practice the idea of a peaceful and classless society. This was caused by the recognition of Korczak that the society split in two parties : the adult and the children of which the children where [sic] the weaker party. Between both there was a permanent fight of unequal because the children had no chance in this fight. (<http.korczak.com>)

Dr. Korczak's writings on childhood development, and child-adult relationships continue to be recognized by many, even today, as significant contributions to the field of child psychology. During the war, Dr. Korczak moved with the orphans of Dom Sierot—'his' children—to the Warsaw ghetto into which they were forced. The orphanage operated under rapidly deteriorating conditions until finally, on 5 August 1942, two hundred of the children were sent by the Nazis to the death camp at Treblinka. Although his considerable reputation afforded him safe passage out of the ghetto, Dr. Korczak elected to board the train alongside his children. To have accepted freedom while his children faced slaughter would have gone against every value by which the Doctor had lived; remarkably, he had the fortitude to abide by these principles even in the face of certain death.

In keeping with his notation in the opening stage directions that "the author has not invented the events depicted in this play; he has merely recorded them" (116), Sylvanus is faithful to the above story of Dr. Korczak's life and his death. The Narrator's opening monologue, addressed directly to the audience, gives spectators a chance to avoid a challenging play: "You can still leave, you know; no one's forcing you to stay" (117). Following the Narrator's explanation of the play that the audience is about to see, and his offering of several opportunities for them to depart, two actors and an actress join him onstage. The list of the *dramatis personae* emphasizes the fact that the actors are only assuming roles, calling them 'First Actor (Leader of an Elite Gestapo Squad),' 'Second Actor (Dr. Korczak),' 'Actress (German Woman & Jewish Nurse),' and 'Child

(Jürgen & David)'. The 'Actors' first appear onstage as themselves,[27] and before the Narrator convinces them to assume their roles in the play-proper, they make comments such as:

> SECOND ACTOR: What we want is to play *real* parts—know what I mean? Parts you can get your teeth into. Me, for instance—I'd like a chance to play Hamlet. You know how I'd play him? I'd...
>
> ACTRESS: Hey! Stick to the point! The point is we're not satisfied with this piece we're supposed to play in. It doesn't have any decent parts! (118)

Such exchanges, coupled with the Narrator's acknowledgment of and direct address to the audience, establish that they inhabit a world separate from that of the play. This has the simultaneous effect of insisting that Korczak is a piece of theatre. Sylvanus has provided the audience with more fodder for thought, however, by presenting the following paradox: "The author has not invented the events depicted in this play; he has merely recorded them" (116). Indeed, neither Dr. Korczak nor his deeds as depicted in the play are fictional. As I have outlined above, the Dr. Korczak character is based upon a real man of that name, whose life and deeds are well documented by history. Sylvanus has taken enough poetic license with history so that Korczak is clearly not a documentary play, but the narration of fact by means of devices that designate fiction makes for a very interesting hybrid of theatre, fiction, and real life.

The actors' reluctance to participate in the play is reminiscent of the narrator's warnings to the audience that they might want to leave before they become involved in

[27] *i.e.* if Plamen Amaudov were playing 'Second Actor', as in the 2002 LSU Production (see Fn. 47 and bibliography), the Narrator would initially refer to him as 'Plamen', not as 'Dr. Korczak'.

the play. As the play continues, we quickly realize that the stakes of involvement are higher for the audience than passive spectatorship, and higher for the actors than detached role-playing. The actors initially try to avoid involvement with the story by reducing it to its barest essentials. Playing the role of the Doctor, but with no emotional stake in the part, the Second Actor grumbles when the Narrator tries to solicit something beyond this:

> NARRATOR: Weren't you dressed in rags too?
>
> SECOND ACTOR: Why do you ask such pointless questions? I don't have much time. (121)

This stubborn refusal to spend any time with the man behind the basic character—a Polish Jew who is said to have never told a lie—whom the actor has been hired to portray disappears as the play progresses. Initially in a ploy to get the Narrator to quit interfering, the actor says:

> SECOND ACTOR: I'll tell you and you (*to the First Actor and the Actress*) and you too (*to the audience*) what you want to know in a few words. I am the son of a lawyer who became severely ill when I was eleven years old. We were very poor after that—but that's not something one can tell about. What I can tell you about is my father's watch [...]. (121)

As he tells this highly personal story, which is by no means essential to the advancement of the plot, we can see the actor become a more willing participant in the play. Whereas before he had resignedly followed the Narrator's cues, he now begins to help shape the narration. Many of the details that Sylvanus relates—biographical information about Dr. Korczak, or accounts of his actions—appear to be factual, and thus verifiable

accounts of history. However, private stories, like this tale of the watch, seem to be products of the playwright's imagination.[28] Such intricacies *may* have factual basis, but they do not constitute a readily accessible facet of the historical record. The seemingly mundane (and possibly even fictional) details of Janusz Korczak's life are key to Korczak's effectiveness. If Sylvanus had written a true docudrama, the Dr. Korczak character would become an archetypal figure as opposed to "one particular and unique individual"(120). Sylvanus' blend of fact and fiction allows Dr. Korczak to function simultaneously as an iconic image and a human being. This is notable because it exemplifies the way in which the subject/object, individual/collective experience spectrum functions throughout the play. I will discuss this further in Chapter Three. We are witnessing the experiences of one man, Dr. Korczak, but he symbolizes something greater than merely his person. Dr. Korczak represents the choice that many Germans did not make during the war, which was to be governed by spiritual rather than secular interests. His foil, the German officer, represents the latter choice. We may see the same subject/object, individual/collective dichotomy at work in The Outsider, where Beckmann is an individual soldier, but he is also "one of many" who share the struggle of life in postwar Germany. Sylvanus, like Borchert, succeeds in writing a play that encompasses wider German society, but is ultimately concerned with the role of the individual.

As I have stated earlier, Sylvanus was challenged in 1957 by a German

[28] I base this assertion upon the fact that much of the English-language material I was able to access regarding Janusz Korczak deals with his background in child psychology, and his intense devotion to the children in the Warsaw orphanage that is depicted in Sylvanus' play. While I am aware of no biographies, or an autobiography, which include personal stories such as the account of a watch left to young Janusz by his deceased father, it is possible that Sylvanus did consult such a work. As I have stated, my research was at times limited by the fact that I was working in English, rather than in German.

audience more than ready to leave World War Two behind. The Narrator's prefatory remarks to the audience, "What's it to you what happened in Poland in 1940 and 1942? It's a long way from here to Poland" (117), reflect this uneasiness. Although Korczak is in fact fully scripted, it is constructed so as to give the impression that neither the Narrator nor the actors have been given a text to work with. The Narrator wants to tell the story of Dr. Janusz Korczak, but the actors are less than eager to appear in this "problem play" (119). In this way, Sylvanus has dramatized the audience's avoidance of a play dealing with World War Two, and their reluctance to face the "problematic" subject of the Nazi past.

In spite of its challenging, and potentially unpopular subject, Korczak was Sylvanus' most successful work. Born in 1917, Sylvanus had established himself as a writer well before World War Two, with a body of work that included plays for radio, stage, and television, novels, poetry, essays, and musical librettos. His early work was limited in scope, dealing primarily with domestic, or, at most, German situations. It is perhaps unsurprising that World War Two broadened Sylvanus' horizons; his postwar writing reflects a concern not merely with the individual citizen, but with humanity as a whole. Nowhere is this more evident than Korczak. The play is about the life of one man, Dr. Janusz Korczak, but his experiences are shown to have an impact on us all. Information regarding early productions of Korczak, or critical reception of the play in postwar Germany, is unfortunately extremely limited in the English language.[29] A number of German sources note that the play had over one-hundred-and-twenty productions (although no dates or locations are given), was translated into fifteen

[29] Following consultation with several German specialists, I have concluded that such material is scarce, or at least not accessible, even in German. Although I have been unable to remedy this neglect in my study, it is a matter that I hope to address in the future.

languages, and entered into the canon of frequently performed postwar German plays. The Wiesenthal Center's enormous Internet database[30] mentions Korczak only in passing, saying that the play "caused a great stir" in 1957 Germany. I have also been able to view a Web-based slide show archiving a 2002 production of the play in Louisiana, which I shall discuss in Chapters Four and Five. Beyond this, I have been unable to access any information regarding the play's critical reception, or audience response to the work.[31]

[30] The Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance, or Multimedia Learning Center (MLC Online), is an excellent resource for those studying World War Two and the Holocaust, particularly if one is working in the English language. While I have found this respected site to be as reliable as any print source, it must be noted that, as the title 'Museum of Tolerance' would seem to suggest, the MLC Online is not without its biases (as honourable and respectful as those biases may be).

[31] Please refer back to introduction, and Fn. 1, for a more detailed discussion of my reasons for working in English rather than in German, as well as for an overview of the translations I have selected and the reasons I have done so. Working in English has also proven a significant challenge in my analysis of critical reception of the pieces. As noted, this is especially true in the case of Korczak, as very little work has been conducted on the play in the English language.

CHAPTER THREE

Trauma Theory

The tension with which audiences received Beckmann's ruined Germany in 1946, and Dr. Korczak's murderous Nazi state in 1957, seems only human. Physically desecrated as early postwar Germany might have been, it was still a *post*war nation, and so one cannot question the desire its citizens may have had to close this dark chapter of German history. Logical though this may seem, simply patching up their landscape and willing their past to remain behind them was not a viable means by which Germans could obtain this closure. In order to move their nation beyond the horrors of World War Two, it was necessary for German citizens to fully appreciate the ongoing implications of this traumatic era, a process which would require several key steps and many years to accomplish. First and foremost, Germans needed to realize that it was impossible to resume the lives they had known before the War; both Germany's defeat and the incomprehensible Holocaust had destroyed the nation physically, ideologically, and morally speaking. Secondly, ordinary German citizens needed to realize that each of them had played a role in this destruction. As I have detailed in Chapter One, although such citizens may not have supported Hitler's genocidal Endlösung, their willingness to look the other way was not insignificant. Following from this, ordinary German citizens needed to confront the realization that they were not the true victims of the Third Reich. Such individuals were certainly victimized by being forced to make choices that no human being ought to face, but the true victims were those for whom Hitler had already chosen death. While their own suffering was not inconsequential, ordinary German

citizens needed to find a way to acknowledge the true victims of World War Two. In Chapters Four and Five, I will examine the ways in which 1946's The Outsider, and 1957's Korczak, speak to two distinct phases of Germany's process of resolution. Borchert, Beckmann, and the German audiences of 1946 had certainly seen the physical destruction that the war had wreaked upon their bodies and their nation, but for the most part it was not possible for them to see beyond this. In 1957, ordinary German citizens were coming to see that although they had been the victims of war, the Jews had been the victims of ideology. World War Two itself was the trauma facing Germany in 1946, but the war and the cruel ideology that had driven it comprised the trauma Germany was faced with in 1957. Before embarking on my analysis of the ways in which The Outsider and Korczak positioned audiences to witness these two phases of trauma, I will explicate this process, drawing special attention to the ways in which theatre may facilitate it.

The word 'trauma,' which comes from the Greek word for wound, originally referred to an injury inflicted upon the body. However, from the late nineteenth century onwards, and especially in the works of Sigmund Freud, 'trauma' came to designate a wound inflicted upon the mind. Trauma Theory distinguishes between the traumatic situation, the trauma itself, and the symptoms resulting from the trauma. In the case of World War Two, the war itself would be the first of these. The impact that the war had upon those Germans who survived it could be considered the second, and Germany's inability to move beyond the Nazi past towards a more positive future is the last. The phenomenon is conceptualized in numerous ways: as a medical concept (*i.e.* the cataloguing of symptoms in a medical diagnostic manual), as the trigger of intrapsychic processes that need to be analyzed (*e.g.* the therapeutic work conducted with victims of

the Holocaust), and as a socio-political process. Socio-political Trauma Theory recognizes that traumatization is not only an individual process, but also a social process that refers to the society as a whole. As a result, trauma can only be understood within a specific cultural and political context. Based on this theory of trauma as a collectively engendered psychic wound, I will examine the ways in which media designed to reach a broad population, such as theatre, is effective as a means of addressing and resolving the trauma.[32]

Sigmund Freud and his peers were, in the early twentieth century, among the first medical scientists to write extensively about the human mind and trauma. For Freud, the individual's response to a deeply traumatic event seemed paradoxical: logic dictated that one should want to distance oneself, psychologically as well as physically, from the source of the trauma. Time and time again, however, Freud witnessed in his patients an inexplicable compulsion to revisit the trauma, in the form of memories, dreams, and at times even behaviours. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud suggests that:

> [...] the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event. [It is] experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.[33]

Freud came to consider this lure of the unpleasant past as a dangerous pathology; his 'cure' consisted of talk therapy designed to permit the traumatic event to be assimilated

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[32] The models in this paragraph are generalized from a number of sources, including Caruth (Trauma, and Unclaimed Experience), Kaplan (Conscience and Memory), the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and the web-based Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation <http://www.berghof-handbook.net>

[33] Paraphrased by Cathy Caruth in Unclaimed Experience 4.

by his patient's mind, thus minimizing its impact. The Freudian view of trauma suggests that the traumatic event(s) are a temporary disruption of an individual's psyche; with the passage of time, equilibrium may be recovered, and the individual personality will return to its pre-trauma course (Breaking Crystal 170). Freud's basic principle, then, was that insight leads to recovery. Unresolved trauma was not accessible to the conscious mind because it returned only as a series of disjointed, unexplained images in the patient's mind. When one of Freud's patients was able to put these visions into words—Absprechen, literally, "to speak out," in Freud's writings—then they had taken the necessary first step of integrating an unspeakable experience into their conscious personality. Once the trauma could be considered by one's rational mind it would, according to Freud, no longer trouble one's subconscious.

Modern understandings of trauma, clinically as well as culturally and socially, depart radically from Freudian basics. Rather than finding a way for trauma to be minimized, the focus has shifted to finding ways to listen and respond as an individual recounts the traumatic event so that this past never loses its impact. We have come to realize that 'forgotten' does not mean that the event has been erased from one's mind, only that it has been rendered inaccessible to active memory, or to conscious attempts to retrieve it. Recent research, such as that of Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jucovy, suggests that post-trauma, the individual is faced with "a new reality, totally at variance with the framework of social and moral reality that one had once taken for granted."[34] A 1993 article on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), by physicians Lisa Amaya-Jackson and John S. March, recognizes the fact that one of the most significant barriers to

[34] Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jucovy, Eds. "Introduction," Generations of the Holocaust. New York: Basic Books, 1982, 10. Quoted in Yudkin, 170.

treatment is the fact that the therapist must demand a patient's trust, and his or her willingness to explore feelings and face fears, at a time when the patient's trust in previous caregivers has been fundamentally shattered by the traumatic event (647). In spite of this and because of it, the trauma must be addressed, as it has fundamentally altered the individual's universe. This is apparent in the case of post-World War Two Germany, which could neither return to the prewar status quo, nor trust that an alternate future was possible.

Modern thought on trauma retains the notion of Absprechen, or the survivor's ability to speak about the trauma. In the lexicon of modern Trauma Theory, this telling is referred to as testimony, whereby the survivor bears conscious witness to the trauma of the past. The fact that someone is there to listen to this story is every bit as crucial as its telling. In a sense the listener must bear witness as well, to the fact that the survivor has not only survived, but has embarked upon a reclamation of his or her traumatic past. The listener thus shares the responsibility for witnessing the trauma, and it is no longer borne by the survivor alone. The demand for good listeners is, of course, a product of the need to tell. To speak of the traumatic past is to witness it. It has been observed that one of the cruelest ironies of the Holocaust was that, for a time, there was no one who could tell of its horrors. As Laub says, this represents a "collapse of witnessing" (66); the primary witnesses (the Jews) had been exterminated, and potential outside witnesses (ordinary German citizens) failed to occupy their positions as witnesses-by-proxy. In our logocentric culture, this meant that we turned to the narrations of the Nazis, or at best, those of the Allies, to tell us the truth of the Holocaust. The genuine Jewish and German experiences of World War Two failed to enter into cultural representation, and so in a

sense, it was as though these had never taken place. A perversion of the Taoist koan, "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it still make a sound?" the question facing postwar civilization became, "If millions were slaughtered and no one is left to remember it, did it ever really happen?" As Laub observes, when one's history is abolished, one's own identity ceases to exist as well. It is for this reason, if no other, that post-World War Two Germans *had* to return to a past that they had every reason to want to forget. The survivors of the Nazi regime needed to reclaim their positions as witnesses. Their testimony allowed for the possibility that meaning could be found in the traumatic past; this production of meaning was a necessary step in moving forward rather than remaining trapped in a cycle of painful (subconscious) repetition of the trauma.

Given that the Holocaust may well be the most cataclysmic trauma that modern humanity has faced, it is not surprising that Trauma Theory is widely recognized as a valuable means of understanding, and perhaps of helping, those who endured it. Beyond its application to the specific field of Holocaust studies, Trauma Theory may also be used to explain the more general effects of war. World War Two and the Holocaust are each monumental moments in history, so when listening to survivors' stories of trauma, we must remain vigilant against melding individual tales into versions of the same story. The scope of the trauma encompasses all of humanity, and yet the nature of the trauma is also comprised of many individual experiences. The Nazi era is 'definitive,' at least in the sense that it is a verifiable part of history. However, its incomprehensible horror resists any reduction of this verifiable history into a single narrative. In addition, any narration, almost invariably, trivializes the enormity of the horror. If any sort of meaning is to be found in an event so calamitous, it can surely be reached only by multiple

attempts to understand the trauma. By preserving the unique voice of each individual who wishes to recount the trauma, we may approach the truth of an event that we can barely comprehend as real. The challenge facing the listener is to find ways to recognize each story—even if all are centred on the same traumatic event—as a deeply individual experience. As trauma theorist Cathy Caruth writes, the task of therapists, literary critics, neurobiologists, and filmmakers alike, is to ask "how we can listen to trauma beyond its pathology for the truth that it tells us, and how we might perhaps find a way of learning to express the truth beyond the painful repetitions of traumatic suffering" (Trauma viii).

Before embarking on an analysis of The Outsider and Korczak in relation to their function as witnesses to the trauma of World War Two, I would like to re-emphasize a point that I made in Chapter Two, which is that 1946 and 1957 mark two very distinct phases in the formation of Germany's postwar identity. Trauma Theory as applied to literature does not generally recognize physical, as opposed to psychological, trauma, but I believe that it is useful to make such a distinction here. The Outsider, written during a time when Germany's ruined landscape clearly denoted defeat, was in a position only to address the physical trauma of World War Two. Conditions in Borchert's early postwar Germany necessarily limited the playwright's and the audience's cognizance of the broader scale of the tragedy (*i.e.* the Holocaust). Ordinary German citizens could not see beyond their own suffering, and thus could not see that they were not the ones who had paid the war's ultimate price. By 1957, the physical trauma of World War Two was no longer as immediate. However, Germany had by no means healed, as it had yet to confront the psychological trauma of having survived Nazism. Korczak forcibly returned

Germans to questions of guilt, complicity, and victimhood, which were characteristic of this second phase of Germany's trauma.

In her essay "Truth and Testimony," Dori Laub argues that witness cannot be borne in any other way than a return to past trauma. Speaking of World War Two, and specifically the Holocaust, Laub notes that despite virtually insurmountable difficulties, some individuals were able to witness the Holocaust from within the trauma. She speaks of those who tried to record what was happening—Anne Frank's diary comes to mind—and struggled to communicate their experiences to those outside of the trauma. Sadly, "these attempts to inform oneself and to inform others were doomed to fail. The historical imperative to bear witness could essentially *not be met during the actual occurrence*" (Laub 68, emphasis in original). Laub explains this predicament by returning to cognitive models of the mind and trauma. The events of World War Two were so incomprehensibly atrocious that the individuals who experienced these directly could not assimilate them into pre-existent understandings of the world. The mind of a cognizant individual in the midst of World War Two Germany could literally not comprehend the experience; therefore, such an individual's attempts to witness the war were doomed to fail. If one was not in a position to fully understand the experience of World War Two oneself, then one obviously could not properly convey this experience to others:

> The degree to which bearing witness was required, entailed such an outstanding measure of awareness and of comprehension of the event—of its dimensions, consequences, and above all, of its radical *otherness* to all known frames of reference—that it was beyond the limits of human ability (and willingness) to

> grasp, to transmit, or to imagine. There was therefore no concurrent "knowing" or assimilation of the history of the occurrence. (Laub 68)

This does not mean that efforts to witness the Holocaust and the war as they unfolded were without merit. To return to my earlier example, Anne Frank's diary has been, and still is, a work of monumental significance. However, even the most successful attempt to provide concurrent witness to the Nazi era is necessarily limited in scope.

The meaning of Germany's trauma during World War Two is a product of perceptions, both of those who experienced the events firsthand, and of those who listen to accounts of these experiences. Until Germans were able to stand outside of the trauma and witness their past selves within it, and until those who had not experienced the trauma themselves were willing and able to bear witness to this process of witnessing, the meaning of the trauma could not be created. Without meaning, there could be no understanding; without understanding, there could be no resolution. As one Holocaust survivor stated, "We wanted to survive so as to live one day after Hitler, in order to be able to tell our story."[35] Borchert's and Sylvanus' respective plays highlight the value of not just this one day, but of one year, then one decade. The limitations of The Outsider in terms of providing witness to a war only one year passed, and the fuller extent to which Korczak was able to fill this gap, signal the necessity of Germany's return to the past. Those who survived the trauma bore a moral responsibility to witness it for those who had not. This is why The Outsider and Korczak still merit our attention today. Voices that emerged from the trauma, such as those of Borchert and Sylvanus, provide invaluable testimony as to the nature of the trauma. The importance of these voices from

[35] Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies (Yale), quoted in Laub, "Truth and Testimony" 63.

within the realm of the trauma is matched only by the significance of the fact that they can be heard by ears, and assimilated by minds, which exist outside of the trauma. As Sylvanus' narrator tells the audience, "It's a long way from here to Poland" (117). Although a 1957 German audience, and even more so a twenty-first century North American audience, are "a long way" from the trauma, they are still potentially valuable witnesses to its reality. Psychological and temporal distance may even be advantageous; if we are prepared to be good listeners, this distance has endowed us with a far greater understanding of the enormity of the trauma than early postwar audiences could ever have possessed. Because we are in such a position, our responsibility to bear witness to the trauma is at least as great today as it was for audiences in the postwar German era.

In light of the fact that plays such as The Outsider and Korczak entail a return to the past, it is worth examining the way in which memory engages with trauma. Memory has at times been considered a sort of compulsion for the survivor of trauma; recall Freud's concern with the fact that his patients were unable to stop mentally revisiting their traumatic pasts. Despite the potential intrusiveness of certain recollections, memory itself is a survivor's most powerful means of reclaiming the past. Each memory is its own narrative; the act of remembering World War Two allows each survivor to construct his or her own version of what really happened. While the value of shared World War Two memorials, such as the aforementioned tribute at Dachau, is clear, there is a danger that memory may become just another tool of hegemonic discourse in the public realm. The controversy surrounding 1985's planned Bitburg memorial draws this matter into

sharp relief.[36] Private memories are perhaps more useful than public ones, at least in terms of their ability to help a post-traumatic culture make meaning of its past. Because each individual is, of course, the owner of his or her own memories, the process of remembering the past may allow one to take ownership of his or her own role in history. As I have emphasized earlier, taking ownership of, or responsibility for, their own actions during World War Two and the Nazi era was an absolutely essential step for German citizens to take if they were to reclaim their traumatic past. This process may help to heal the individual, but the ability to share private memories with the public in a way that respects the truth of the past is key to the healing of postwar society as a whole.

Theatre offers a forum in which private memories may be made public, because it is paradigmatic of the type of "active memory" (Maier) that may allow citizens of postwar Germany to engage in a meaningful dialogue with their past. In 1987, amid some debate over whether or not a "unified visible presentation of a problematic history [was] possible at all" (Maier 123), Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl broke ground for the construction of the House of History (Haus der Geschichte) in Bonn, and the German Historical Museum (Deutsches Historisches Museum) in Berlin. These structures are certainly valuable as a means for Germans to know their past, but what Maier calls a "linear and coherent sense of reaction and progress—the dialectic in glass cases" (125) may not provide citizens with particularly fruitful encounters with history. The difficulty

[36] In 1985, then-U. S. president Ronald Reagan was scheduled to lay a wreath at the German military cemetery in Bitburg, to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of V-E Day. Rather than playing out as a straightforward, respectful return to the past, the event raised painful questions about how America, Germany, and the world were choosing to remember the traumatic events of World War Two. The apparent sanctioning of a history which privileged Western memories over, say, Jewish ones emphasized the fact that memory, like truth, is a function of power. The custodians of public memory, such as those who were behind what has come to be termed "Bitburg History," have an awesome responsibility to ensure the quality of the witness that postwar society bears to the true victims of the traumatic World War Two and Nazi past.

with a museum is that it presents itself as a stable monument of historical truth, without acknowledging that even the most unbiased attempt at presenting the past can only ever hope to present a single, unified perspective on it. A room full of World War Two artifacts is certainly not without merit. The darkest emblems of Germany's past need to be exposed, both as reminders for those who lived through the Nazi era, and as tangible symbols for current generations, revealing how and why the world was forever changed by World War Two and the Holocaust. A museum may recognize the past, but merely presenting the Third Reich as an immovable, distant monument is futile if one wishes to move beyond this recognition, and approach an understanding of the relevance of the past to both the present and the future.

In describing his concept of active memory, the sort flexible enough to accommodate the fact that the memories of each individual are all valid facets of a shared history, Maier uses the "memory palace" of Matteo Ricci as an analogy. At first more recognizable as a tool of psychology than of literature, the memory palace is a version of an ancient mnemonic device that Catholic missionary Ricci taught his Chinese followers in 1596. The idea behind the palace is that it is not a real structure built out of concrete and other tangible materials, but that it is a fictive structure of one's mind, flexible enough to accommodate the ever-growing collection of things that the individual wishes to remember. Ricci suggested that each item in this inventory of memories be assigned a unique image; his method of providing tangible form to the fluidity of thought is a trick of memorization that any modern psychologist would easily recognize. "To everything that we wish to remember, we should give an image, and to every one of these images we

should assign a position where it can repose peacefully until we are ready to reclaim it by an act of memory."[37]

Along similar lines, Jeanette Malkin's Memory-Theater and Postmodern Drama evokes Giulio Camillo's late Renaissance conception of a "memory-theater." The Italian artisan never constructed the sort of theatre articulated in L'Idea del Theatro (1550), but his book provides detailed descriptions of how it was to have been built, as well as of its purpose. Structurally, it was based upon Vitruvius' description of a Roman theatre: a small wooden amphitheatre rising in seven levels, which were divided by seven gangways, each of which was to be decorated with complex images drawn from Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Cabalistic, and Christian traditions. This mélange of occult and mythic icons was intended to bring the past into the present, while their placement was meant to act as a "mental trajectory aiding its user towards remembrance and metaphysical understanding" (Malkin 2). In a reversal of the typical configuration of theatre, Camillo's spectator was to stand in the centre, where the stage would normally be, so that the iconic images of the gangways might surround him or her. Camillo envisaged his theatre as a forum for perfecting the personal memories of each spectator via the evocation of a transcendent memory of the ages. Signs (in this case the iconic images on the gangways) would gain their meaning only through their relationship with each specific viewer; signs might read differently for each individual, and so their meaning could never be fixed.

In Chapter Four, I will illuminate the application of both Ricci and Camillo's methods of flexible memory to the theatre of Borchert and Sylvanus. While it would be a

[37] Ricci's words to his followers, quoted in Jonathan D. Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci, New York: Viking Penguin, 1994.

stretch to claim that the playwrights were consciously emulating either of these models, the structure of their work is similar. Memory is not a stable monument to the past, nor does it have a single form that is unified and universal. The past cannot be reconstructed as a linear chain of events, but only as an amaranthine collection of signs or images, which gain meaning as they are recalled and reconsidered by the individual mind. There is ultimately no true version of the past; relevance of the past to the present and future is always a product of its relevance to each individual.

Questions of the past, of memory, and of which memories bear faithful witness to the trauma of World War Two, are all ultimately dependent upon the individual's role in history and in trauma. In his 1998 work, The Politics of Truth, French philosopher-historian Michel Foucault lucidly articulates the complex social relationships that exist among the individual, truth, and history. Like much of post-World War Two French philosophy, Foucault's theories are dominated by the question of constructing oneself as a "meaningful subject" (Foucault 174). It is from this place of self-agency that the individual is in a position to accept responsibility for past choices: "Given the absurdity of wars, slaughters, and despotism, it seemed then to be up to the individual subject to give meaning to his existential choices" (174). Foucault advocates confession—"declar[ing] aloud and intelligibly the truth about oneself" (173)—as the necessary first step in this process of self-recognition. In the case of Germany following the Second World War, confession, or acknowledgment of the individual citizen's role in the Holocaust, is an essential precondition of his or her ability to move beyond the horror of the war. Individual Germans must recognize themselves as *objects*—components in the architecture of the Third Reich—before they can assume the position of *subjects*:

individuals who may have made poor choices, but who are ready to accept responsibility for these and thereby move forward.

On one level, then, we may accept The Outsider and Korczak as relatively personal confessions, or private memories (those of Borchert and Sylvanus, and perhaps of their audiences as well) of the role that ordinary German citizens played in the tragedy of World War Two. On this level, the plays permit the guilty parties to perceive themselves subjectively, as agents of their own will. Beyond this, because The Outsider and Korczak engage with at least some verifiable history of World War Two, they also operate as public memories, or as narrations of historical fact (both with and without the overtones of truth), thus allowing these same parties to perceive themselves as objects. The multifaceted attitude that these plays display towards witnessing Germany's past allows Borchert and Sylvanus to construct meaning from the unfathomable trauma of World War Two. By sharing private memories within the public realm of theatre, The Outsider and Korczak honour the victims of the Third Reich. In recognizing that a universalized truth may only be approached via the consideration of a multiplicity of perceptions, these plays give meaning to Germany's past, and provide purpose for its future. If individual audience members, both in postwar Germany and in present-day North America, can recognize aspects of Beckmann's landscape as their own, identify their own laissez faire attitude towards far-off history in the words of Korczak's actors, or believe that their unique perceptions of the stories before them constitute an essential component of the truth of World War Two, then The Outsider and Korczak have succeeded. They have become tools both of reflection and of intervention into the trauma of World War Two.

CHAPTER FOUR

Postwar Germany: Trauma, Art, and Reality

Trauma and Art

In the case of The Outsider, the archetypal yet highly individualistic Beckmann is the obvious point of departure for query into the ways in which the private traumas of the past may only be adequately addressed via public witness. While evidence of Beckmann's dual function, as an Everyman figure as well as a distinct persona, may be found upon a close reading of the text, my analysis of the play has benefited from an opportunity to see The Outsider in production. Throughout this Chapter, I will draw references from both Borchert's text, and from the Oberlin College production of the work.[38]

Beckmann's initial response to the lack of a stable Germany, and the loss of his own identity therein, is to attempt suicide. In the Prologue, we learn that he has thrown himself into the Elbe River, "one of that great gray number who've simply had it—who throw in their hand and won't play anymore" (54). Beckmann's suicide attempt is thwarted by the personified Elbe, who tells him that she "[doesn't] want [his] miserable slice of life" (57). Clearly intended to function as an allegory, the Elbe—a geographical artery of Eastern and Western Germany—serves as yet another symbol of Germany's fragmentation of former East and West Germany; notably, Beckmann is out of place even in this discombobulated world. For Beckmann and many of the "great gray number"

[38]Staab, M. F., trans. The Man Outside. By Wolfgang Borchert. Dir. M. F. Staab and Asher Rapkin. Oberlin Little Theatre, Oberlin, OH. 31 Jan. 2003.

whom he represents, life's negation appears preferable to its continued pursuit in postwar Germany. The Elbe's refusal to let Beckmann die is indicative of Borchert's own message to his postwar audience. Casting oneself in the role of victim, as Beckmann does when he attempts to cast himself in the Elbe, is, Borchert feels, too easy. The choice of death following the war is comparable to the choice to do nothing to stop Hitler's "Final Solution" during the war. In Chapter One, I have characterized the latter as a *non*-choice; for many German citizens it was simply easier to allow themselves to be carried along by the Third Reich than it was to take a stand against it. In 1946, Borchert is telling them that it is imperative that they take a stand now.

Significantly, the stand that Borchert challenges postwar German citizens to take has little if anything to do with the stand they failed to take in defense of the Jews. The Jews who were murdered at the hands of the Third Reich did not have the luxury of choosing to live, so it is impossible to interpret Borchert's refusal to let Beckmann die as a reminder of this. The Outsider does point out that Beckmann's attempted suicide is the ludicrous, selfish action of a man wallowing in self-pity:

> ELBE: You mean, what you want to do, you little baby you, is cut out! Is that right? You think you can't stick it out up there, right? You like to kid yourself that you've been through enough, right? [...] Just what can't you take, you poor sad old thing?
>
> BECKMANN: Everything. I can't bear it up there anymore. I can't bear starving anymore. I can't bear limping around up there anymore and standing by my own bed; and then limping out of the house again because the bed's been taken. My leg, my bed, even my bread—I can't stick it out anymore, don't you

understand?

ELBE: No. You snotty-nosed little suicide. No, do *you* understand? Do you really suppose that just because your wife won't go beddy-by with you anymore, because you've a limp and your stomach rumbles, you're entitled to creep in here under my skirts? To go jumping in the water—just like that? (57)

Borchert makes it clear that Beckmann, who has survived the war, does not have the right to choose death now. However, it would be a stretch to say that his duty to live is based upon the fact that the Holocaust deprived so many of this choice. The Nazis and the Jews receive only one direct mention in The Outsider. Midway through the play, Beckmann returns to the house where his parents used to live, but finds that a woman named Mrs. Kramer has taken their place. This woman explains that Beckmann's parents are deceased; when he says, "They had no reason to die" (89), she explains:

MRS. KRAMER: Well, what happened was that the old Beckmanns just couldn't take it anymore. You know. They went just a wee bit overboard during the Third Reich—if you follow.[...] And he was a bit nutty about the Jews, as his son you know that, don't you? Your old man couldn't stand them—in fact they gave him fits. He was always announcing that he'd like to chase them all back to Palestine, single-handed.[...] He gave a bit too much of himself to the Nazis. Then, when the Brownshirts disappeared, he found himself high and dry, your father did. And all just over the Jews. He really did overdo it. Why couldn't he keep his mouth shut, anyway?[...] And when it was over with those brown-shirted boys, the authorities came around and touched him on his sore spot.[...] They gave your dad the sack, without benefit of pension, of course.[...]

> I guess that pretty much finished them off. The old people just couldn't cope with it all. They didn't even want to, I guess. So—they denazified themselves once and for all.[...] Denazified themselves. Just an expression, you know. Sort of a private joke with us. (89)

These lines are spoken by "Mrs. Kramer, who is simply Mrs. Kramer, which is just what's so awful" (*dramatis persona* 52). She is far from a sympathetic character, and is nasty and cold-hearted in her dealings with Beckmann. Other than his sorrow at learning his parents have died, Beckmann pays her words no heed. The Outsider, via Beckmann's response to this commentary on the Jews, portrays a postwar Germany that is not necessarily anti-Semitic, but that is understandably more concerned with its own plight than that of the Jews.

Mrs. Kramer's disengagement with the treatment of Jews under the Third Reich is irresponsible, but the other opinion she offers on the old Beckmanns' deaths is downright repugnant. She says that it is too bad that they chose gassing as a means of death: "Too bad about the gas, though! We might have done a month's cooking with it!" (91). Given Borchert's placement of this statement immediately following her talk of the Nazis, it is clearly an allusion to the gas chambers in which so many Jews died. Mrs. Kramer's concern is not with the fact that the old Beckmanns and the alluded-to Jews have died, but rather with the fact that their deaths have inconvenienced her. The dead are thus not merely disregarded as victims, but villainized as inconveniences and obstacles to those Germans who desire a return to normalcy following the war (*i.e.* the Mrs. Kramers of the era). When Borchert says of Mrs. Kramer that she is "simply Mrs. Kramer, which is just what's so awful" (52), he means that there is nothing extraordinary about the woman.

From her own words, we know that she is at best a complacent citizen, content to keep her mouth shut rather than to make the effort to express an opposing view. At worst, she is a bitter, self-pitying miser, who looks at death by gas and mourns not the lives that were lost, but only the gas that was wasted. What makes her truly awful, though, is the fact that she is no different than countless other postwar German citizens; as characterized by Borchert, Mrs. Kramer is not the exception, but rather the rule.

While Mrs. Kramer does not actually say that hating the Jews was wrong, she hardly seems disturbed by the fact that Beckmann's father felt this way. Her assessment that old Beckmann "gave a bit too much of himself to the Nazis" suggests that she herself may have belonged to the legion of Nazi supporters (discussed in Chapter One) who did not share Hitler's murderous rage, but may have been mildly anti-Semitic. Alternatively, she may have been one of those who did not dislike the Jews at all, but supported the Nazi Party for other reasons. In either case, her suggestion that old Beckmann should have just kept his mouth shut is ominous. The silent acquiescence of a nation was a highly significant step along the path which culminated in Hitler's Endlösung. The problem is not only that old Beckmann did not keep quiet about the Jews, but equally that Mrs. Kramer *did* keep quiet about the man's anti-Semitic views. Perhaps she was not consumed by Hitler's genocidal mentality, but she certainly turned a blind eye to it.

In Chapter Three, I have noted that it is useful to make a distinction between the physical and the psychological stages of trauma that Germany faced following the war. One of the tangible symbols indicating that The Outsider is concerned primarily with the former is the gas-mask glasses that Beckmann wears throughout the play. These spectacles are an effective metaphor for his world-view; he is literally seeing Germany

through the desolate optics of a failed war, and one that he has not yet put behind him. These glasses stand out immediately to those whom Beckmann encounters; both the Girl and the Colonel question why Beckmann still wears them. A conversation with the Cabaret Producer for whom Beckmann is auditioning highlights the incongruity of such apparel now that the war is over:

> PRODUCER: [...] That reminds me: why do you run around in those grotesque glasses? Where did you ever find such weird things, anyway? Just looking at you gives me the hiccups. That's really quite a bizarre piece of mechanism you've got sitting on your nose there.
>
> BECKMANN (*automatically*): These are my gas-mask glasses. We got them in the army—at least those of us who needed them did—so that even in gas masks we could recognize the enemy and strike him down.
>
> PRODUCER: But the war has been over for months now! We've been lolling around in the lap of civilian luxury for ages! How can you possibly still show up in that military regalia? (79)

Until Beckmann can rid himself of this "military regalia," he will continue to view the world from the mindset of a soldier at war, and see everyone and everything as his "enemy," or at least as a form of opposition. This perspective limits Beckmann to concern with the physical trauma of World War Two, or what the war has cost him in a tangible sense (*i.e.* his health, his wife, his parents, and his generally comfortable prewar German way of life). As I have shown in Chapter Three, Caruth and others have recognized the fact that it is impossible for one to bear proper witness to a trauma from within. Beckmann shows occasional insight into the larger scale of the tragedy, such as

when he challenges the Colonel's assurance that everything he did was justified in the name of "good old German truth" (70), but this insight does not extend to consideration of the Jewish tragedy. Beckmann realizes that he must shoulder some of the responsibility for Germany's postwar state, but he worries only about how he may have allowed his comrades to die. To extend the gas-mask glasses metaphor, Beckmann cannot appreciate the suffering of others yet, because he still cannot see beyond his own wounds. Emblematic of early postwar Germany, Beckmann is presently too overwhelmed by his own trauma to be ready to bear witness to the trauma of others. Beckmann has begun to grapple with what his own actions have done to Germany, but not what they have done to the Jews; his trauma is Germany's war-torn past, but not its Nazi past and the deeper implications thereof. While I feel that the obfuscation of reality is Borchert's chief reason for outfitting Beckmann with the gas-mask glasses, I would like to point out that there is a positive implication to this as well. The glasses do limit Beckmann's ability to bear witness to the war. The fact that he is forced to continue wearing them, however, is one of Borchert's most pointed reminders that it is impossible to view Germany as one had in the past. Beckmann is still wearing these glasses because no others are available. His direct involvement in the war has literally placed him in a position to witness the trauma, and this has prevented him from returning to the illusory "lap of civilian luxury" in which the Producer insists Germany now revels.

The alienation of Beckmann and the audience from what is real may be understood in terms of Adorno's statement regarding the changed nature of art after Auschwitz. I have said that art was, potentially, an essential component in Germany's address of the trauma of World War Two, but this role was not without controversy.

Numerous other theorists have shared Adorno's view that art after Auschwitz, or, for that matter, after the German experience of World War Two, is problematic in several ways. Following an event so horrific:

> [...] the breakdown of the consensus of a common humanity makes it difficult to tell the story of what is called the Holocaust, not least because of the difficulties of finding a language to tell the story but also because of the difficulties of finding a medium or text that will bear the impossibility of imagining the unimaginable, of rendering into art the negation of art. (Sicher 3)

The transformation of an experience, in this case World War Two and the Holocaust, into a work of art implies that the artist has found some sort of meaning in it, and has been able to communicate this meaning in a way that audiences can understand. The concern is that if the Holocaust and World War Two can be reduced to a work of art, then perhaps they are no longer outside the bounds of humanity. As Sicher notes, finding a language, and a medium of expression, by which the trauma can be told is also a problem. In the minds of many, the horror of the Third Reich was so absolute that anything it had touched was forever tainted: "The devaluation of the word is made more apparent by the manipulation of the German language for the murderous purposes of Nazism" (Sicher 299). By the same token, art had become suspect following its exploitation at the hands of Goebbels.

It is true that art, at least in its prewar conception, was an unlikely means by which Germans could address the trauma of World War Two. As theorist George Steiner writes of the postwar era, "We come after. We know now that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day's work at

Auschwitz in the morning" (quoted in Sicher 298). By recognizing that they are writing in the "after," Borchert and Sylvanus reconstitute language and art in such a way that they are not the tainted tools of Nazism, but the therapeutic voices of postwar Germany. The changed role of art in postwar Germany is addressed directly in both The Outsider and Korczak. In the case of the former, it is raised in Scene 4, when Beckmann goes to the circus, and auditions for a role in the cabaret. As I have detailed in Chapter Two, Beckmann is hoping that art will help him to make sense of his chaotic postwar reality. In addition, he hopes that his voice—the voice of Germany's youth—will be welcome here, even as it has been shunned elsewhere. The Producer agrees with Beckmann that "it's precisely here in the field of Art that we really need Youth most again, a Youth which will take a fresh, active stand on all our problems today" (79), but it turns out that Beckmann is not the sort of "Youth" that the Producer has in mind. The Producer indicates that he believes art to be the medium by which the "problems [of] today" may be addressed; however, the sort of art he proposes is distinctly that of yesterday. He claims that what he is looking for is "an avant-garde, the kind perpetually poised to present the living gray suffering face of our times!" (79). Beckmann, with his gas-mask glasses and shorn military hair, is quite literally the face of this suffering, but the Producer recoils from such stark reminders of the war. Having momentarily adopted the Colonel's attitude that his war-ravaged countenance is "comic" (76), Beckmann tries to sell the idea to the Producer:

> BECKMANN: [...] But just think—on stage these fantastically hideous glasses would probably be quiet [sic] effective.
>
> PRODUCER: What? How do you mean?

BECKMANN: I mean: they'd seem humorous. People laugh themselves sick when they see me in these glasses, right? And then there's the haircut and the coat. And my face, just think, my face! It's all terribly funny, don't you think? (81)

Despite having said that he believes his cabaret is the ideal forum for taking a stand on the problems of the postwar Germany Beckmann so clearly represents, the Producer cannot accept that art, like everything, has been changed by the war:

PRODUCER (*gradually contracting a slight case of the creeps*): Funny? Funny? The laughter will probably stick in their throats, my dear man. Just looking at you will send cold horror creeping up their necks: naked fear in the face of a ghost from the underworld. You know, really, people want to use art for pleasure, to be elevated, edified by—they can do without looking at visions of icecold ghosts. No, we can't just let you loose on them like that. The approach has to be more genial, more self-assured—cheerier. Positive! Yes, my dear man, positive! Consider Goethe! Think of Mozart! The Maid of Orleans! Richard Wagner! Max Schmeling! Shirley Temple! (81)

As the Producer roles off the names of the youth he believes postwar audiences want to see, Borchert touches on just why it is that art after Auschwitz is, potentially, barbaric. Art that bears witness to the victims of World War Two, of whom Beckmann is The Outsider's prime example, has been rejected as too horrible for audiences to stomach. The Producer says that audiences want to "use art for pleasure," and it is of course not even desirable that they should find this in Beckmann's suffering. Audiences need something vibrant, and not the "ghost[s]" of the past, but it is telling that the artists he invokes are specters themselves. Beckmann conjures up memories of recent trauma, but

figures such as Goethe are reminders of Germany's mythic glory.[39] Significantly, the Producer longs for Wagner, evoking an artist whose ideology (*i.e.* the highly nationalistic, anti-Semitic overtones of many of his works, particularly Der Ring der Nibelungen (The Ring)) bore a notable influence upon the National Socialist Party. The fact that mainstream culture, including Wagner, was still enjoyed during the Third Reich, is precisely why such art has taken on new significance in the postwar era.

After the war, when Germany and the world had seen how art and culture could exist alongside, and might even be used as the tools of, incomprehensible horror, it is impossible to consider them in the same way again. The traditional purpose, or intention, of art has been to promote aesthetic pleasure, and so herein lay another difficulty; to gain pleasure from anything derived from the trauma of World War Two seems an affront to the victims. The Producer's hope that Goethe's words can return Germany to the glory of Weimar, or that Shirley Temple's smile can transport them into a fictional world where the sun will come out tomorrow, is naïve, of course, but it is also understandable. As the Goebbels machine conclusively demonstrated during the Third Reich, art has the potential to create its own reality; postwar audiences had every reason to wish for this pseudo-reality to be pleasurable. Some light-hearted art did flourish in postwar Germany,[40] but artists such as Borchert, possessing a seeming awareness that they were writing in Steiner's "after," challenged postwar audiences by forcing them to consider figures such as Beckmann, a "ghost from the underworld" (81). Borchert deserves credit

[39] Interestingly, as I have noted in Chapter One, films like Triumph of the Will attempted, quite successfully, to present Hitler as a similarly mythic icon in a Germany that was to be revitalized under Nazi leadership.

[40] Martin Walser, Die Zimmerschlacht (1967), the "escapist" dramas of Alexander Lernet-Holenia: Spanische Komödie (1948), Radetzky (1956), Das Finanzamt (after a novel of the same name, 1956), Das Goldkabinett (after a novel of the same name, 1957), Die Schwäger des Königs (1958), Die Thronprätendenten (1965), Die Hexe von Endor (1968). I am indebted to Dr. Marianne Henn for her assistance in generating this list of examples.

for realizing that a return to pleasurable art such as that of Goethe, art which "elevates" (81) Germany's esteem of itself, would be irresponsible in a time when Germany had not yet borne witness to the trauma of World War Two. Until German citizens had processed the fact that the incomprehensible atrocities of World War Two were now just as much a part of their national identity as the unimaginable genius of an artist such as Goethe was, they had no right to simply enjoy the pleasures of the latter. In The Outsider, Borchert begins the process of bearing witness to World War Two's dark legacy, but the work is very clearly the product of a transitional stage in German art and culture. Despite Borchert's indictment of those who would just return to Germany's past masters, in the form of a "Cabaret Producer, who would like to be decent—but then decides against it" (*dramatis persona*), The Outsider's allusions to Faust[41] are unmistakable. Consciously or not, Borchert seems to be trying to ease audiences into the new responsibilities attached to art. Just as the horrors of Auschwitz exist alongside Goethe in Steiner's paradigm, Beckmann's nightmarish world is framed with Faustian flourishes. Writing in 1946, Borchert recognized that the art of the past was no longer sufficient, but he still returned to familiar forms to tell Beckmann's story. The Outsider surpasses the goals which the Producer sets out for art—to give pleasure, to elevate, and to edify—yet the influence of these values is felt. Borchert does not abandon theatre's purpose first and foremost to entertain, but he goes beyond this with The Outsider, a play that challenges audiences with its subject matter and dramaturgy before it allows them to appreciate its aesthetic merit.

[41] Although Borchert left no records indicating that his emulation of Goethe's masterwork was conscious, there is wide consensus amongst scholars that this is the case (see Chapter Two).

As he had done with the Jewish question, Sylvanus pushed the question of art's changed role in postwar Germany a step further than did Borchert. The Outsider, while recognizing the necessity of this change, does not itself radically deviate from the aesthetic values of the past. It is true that Korczak appears to be influenced by the techniques of Pirandello,[42] but the piece is, generally speaking, far less reliant on prewar models than is The Outsider. More significantly, Sylvanus' bare-bones approach to dramaturgy effectively eliminates "pleasure," and perhaps "elevation" as the purposes of his art.[43] As I have outlined earlier, the actors who open Korczak long to play "real parts" (118) such as Hamlet and Ophelia. Insisting that the piece they will be performing has no "made-up plots" (119), the Narrator reminds both the actors and the audience of art's potential, and perhaps its duty, to be something more than entertainment:

> NARRATOR: You mean you don't think this play is worthy of your talents. Well perhaps it's a matter of our all learning exactly what sacrifices we need to make. (120)

The actors clearly do not feel that the stage is an appropriate forum by which to address the issues that the Narrator proposes, complaining that the piece will "be so solemn we won't be able to act" (119); this comment is dead-on. Technically speaking, of course,

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[42] Although Wellwarth calls Sylvanus' approach in Korczak "an adaptation of the Pirandellian method" (xvi), the play's similarities to any of Pirandello's dramas strike me as limited. Perhaps the chief point of congruency is the elimination of any pretense that the world depicted onstage is real, even for the characters. As Eric Bentley said of Pirandello's most famous drama, Six Characters in Search of an Author, "this was the first play ever written in which the boards of the theatre did not symbolize and represent some other place, some other reality." (vii) (Eric Bentley, trans. Pirandello, Luigi. Six Characters in Search of an Author. New York: Signet Classic, 1998.)

[43] The elimination of "pleasure" seems clear enough, given the Narrator's comment (quoted) that one purpose of the play is to learn about sacrifices. Although "elevation" is not eliminated in one sense (*i.e.* the play may elevate by educating), it is eliminated in the sense that The Outsider's Cabaret Producer has proposed in the passages I have previously quoted from that play (*i.e.* art can elevate a German audience by instilling national pride, and reminding them of past icons, such as Goethe, Schiller, Wagner, etc.)

the actors in Korczak *are* acting, and they do have "real parts" to play. However, Sylvanus does not intend for them to provide dramatic flourishes, but merely to speak for those who are no longer able. As Caruth writes in Trauma, "if words are not trustworthy or adequate, the life that is chosen can become the vehicle by which the struggle to tell continues" (63). In Korczak, the actors are necessary because their bodies become a significant part of the narration, replacing the Narrator, who was willing to tell Janusz Korczak's story, but had only words at his disposal. The insufficiency of words, and the fact that the story of Korczak cannot be related merely as a scripted narrative, becomes clear when the Actress finally realizes that she and her cohorts must participate in the play and not simply recite it:

> NARRATOR: The scene's over, Jürgen. We don't need you any more for the time being. You don't have to wait here; we'll call you if we need you again.
>
> CHILD: But I want to build a big tower!
>
> ACTRESS: If you're going to build a really big tower, then of course you can stay!
>
> NARRATOR: But you're changing our plot. [...] in that case I'm just superfluous here.
>
> ACTRESS: No, you've got to stay. We need you—we need you desperately. You can be whatever we need you to be from time to time. A part of the sky, perhaps; a chair or a picture: I don't know. Perhaps a tool, perhaps a death chamber, perhaps death itself. (130)

Notably, the Actress does not suggest that the Narrator will be needed as another human character in the story. The basic aspects of the plot, such as time, place, and characters—the aspects that the Narrator has been helpful in relating—are established. Because these

are factually based, they are not open to artistic interpretation. What the Actress has realized is that *how* the cast chooses to tell the story of Janusz Korczak is every bit as important as the facts that the Narrator has provided. It is here that the story becomes fluid, and here that the complexity of the trauma may be approached.

When the Narrator's words, which have largely been used to provide historical details of Janusz Korczak's story, have become "superfluous," his person is no longer referent to a human character, either of history or of Sylvanus' invention. As the Actress says, he can instead become whatever is needed as the play progresses. In the very next scene, an opportunity arises:

> SECOND ACTOR: I'm scared—
>
> ACTRESS: What do you mean?
>
> SECOND ACTOR: I don't know....I'm just scared—
>
> ACTRESS: Janusz Korczak! I call upon you. We are in the year 1942.
>
> SECOND ACTOR: 1942.
>
> ACTRESS (*to Narrator*): You yourself are the year. Let the year speak through you. (131)

It is uncertain whether the Second Actor is speaking as himself or as Janusz Korczak when he becomes paralyzed by fear, but in either case, he has reached a point where it is too difficult for him to bear witness to the trauma faced in 1942 Nazi-occupied Poland. While the Narrator's orderly telling of the story might not have been able to get past this barrier, the Actress finds a way to keep Korczak going by shifting some of the burden of bearing witness. Dr. Korczak's story, narrated in a purely factual, historically accurate way, cannot adequately witness to the trauma of its characters. In the theatre, not even a

docudrama (of the sort the Narrator seems to propose early in the play) can provide faithful witness. In Trauma, scholar Robert J. Lifton speaks of how those who do not experience a trauma first-hand may still witness it:

> You must in some significant psychological way experience what [the victims] experience. You can never do that quite. But it's being a survivor by proxy, and the proxy's important. You're not doing what they did, you're not exposed to what they were exposed to, but you must take your mind through, take your feelings through what they went through, and allow that in. (145)

Recognizing that a play about Janusz Korczak's experiences cannot actually *be* those experiences, Sylvanus permits his characters to "allow [the experiences] in," however this is possible. By freeing the actors from the notion that there is any single right way to narrate the story, Sylvanus opens up for his audience the possibility that there is no right way to receive it. This flexibility, both of telling and of listening, is key to understanding why theatre, in its ephemeral nature, is ideal as a medium for addressing the trauma of World War Two. As in the memory theatres of Ricci and Camillo, the shape taken by the past which the play evokes is never fixed, and can always accommodate revisions, additions, and multiple perceptions of what that past means. Given that Korczak did not premiere until 1957, this flexibility is all the more important. While numerous critics have proposed, as I outlined in Chapter Two, that The Outsider was the outraged voice of a generation of Germans who had, like Beckmann, just experienced the war, even the first audiences of Korczak were, as the Narrator reminded them, a "long way" from the trauma. Sylvanus faced an even greater challenge than did Borchert when it came to

finding a way for his audience to "allow [the trauma] in," but it is a challenge that the dramaturgy of Korczak meets.

Reality

Although Oberlin's 2003 The Man Outside was a staged theatrical production, directors Asher Rapkin and M. F. Staab also deferred to Borchert's original conception of the play as a radio drama. In fulfillment of an honours thesis in the field of sound design, Rapkin and Staab explored the potential of sound juxtaposed with image to create a liminal theatrical space. Mimetic space (that which is represented onstage and made visible to the audience), and diegetic space (that which is described or referred to by characters, without tangible onstage representation), operate differently in radio drama than in its stage counterpart. In the latter, "mimetic space is transmitted directly, while diegetic space is mediated through the discourse of characters, and thus communicated verbally and not visually" (Issacharoff 89). By this definition, *all* space in radio drama becomes somewhat diegetic, since the audience must always rely upon characters' descriptions of the dramatic space. Issacharoff considers the mimetic space of radio drama to occupy its own realm, which he calls "auditory mimetic space" (90). The key difference between auditory and regular mimetic space is that the audience is unable to perceive the former in a tangible sense. The landscape of The Outsider as a radio drama, then, is never absolute, and becomes a world even less real than the visual mimetic space of staged drama. This lack of stable space is one of the ways in which Borchert questions the validity, or perhaps even possibility, of the unified Real, a monolithic sign of truth.

The value of mimetic space, or what Rapkin and Staab's production showed an audience, was drawn into question by the fact that their actors, with the exception of Aaron Helgeson in the role of Beckmann, served only as visual referents during the production. Assuming an almost marionette-like function, they went through the motions

of the play, but remained mute. Each actor had prerecorded his or her lines, and these, along with Borchert's extensive stage directions, were played back like a soundtrack in synch with the action. Whether due to technical difficulties or by design, this soundtrack occasionally fell just out of phase with the onstage movement, temporarily severing ties between what we could see and what we could hear. Rather than detracting from the production, this dissonance highlighted the fact that nothing in Borchert's nightmarish world could be fully trusted. The contradiction of visual and auditory signs served as a jarring reminder that there was no single way to perceive the play; if one fixated on the visual narrative, then one failed to understand subtleties of the auditory narrative, and vice versa. Attuned to the highly visual nature of modern Western culture, Rapkin and Staab's directors' notes in the program urge audiences to "take the time to not only see, but also to listen. Listen to the sound of the words, listen to the silences, listen to what people say" (2). These notes served as a reminder of the richness of Borchert's text, apparent when the play is read, or when it is performed as a radio drama, but susceptible to domination by visual signs when staged in a theatre.

Sign systems are of course *always* susceptible to variations in interpretation, but The Outsider as a radio drama makes this phenomenon absolute. If the referents have no visual representation for an audience, then they can only ever exist as the product of each individual's mind. By extension, whatever reality these signs point to must also be understood as an inconsistent, highly individualistic entity, and one which has no material form. The Oberlin production's largely silent physical enactment of the play took this questioning of reality a step further. While, in the case of radio drama, the validity of concrete signs becomes secondary to the mental constructs created by the listener, this

effect was both produced and countered by the production's simultaneous transmission as a semi-staged play. Concrete signs were indeed undercut by Rapkin and Staab's insistence that audiences "take the time not only to see, but also to listen," but mental constructs were also undercut by the presence of muted visual referents. One could not entirely trust one's internal perception of the characters and the events of the play, as one might if it were only heard on the radio, or were only read in textual form, because such imaginings would either be confirmed or denied by the ever-present elements of the staged production. Just as meaning in The Outsider as a radio drama is a product of individual audience members' perceptions of reality, meaning in a staged production of the play is largely determined by a director's vision. In the Oberlin production, neither of these perspectives was permitted to dominate. The nature of Beckmann's reality, at least in this production, could only be determined by a combination of perspectives; the collective array of perceptions by the audience was not sufficient to produce meaning, nor could the authoritative narrative imposed by the director be fully trusted. In short, the truth of the piece could only be reached by a combination of private and public ascriptions of meaning.

Humanity's inability to access the truth, or absolute reality, of World War Two is key to Borchert's play. It is clear that the metatheatrical dramaturgical structure of The Outsider introduces audiences to this theme by reminding us that we are witnessing merely a staged, and thus inherently false, (re)presentation of Borchert's larger thesis: World War Two has effectively destroyed not merely the German landscape, but the sense of belonging that German citizens enjoyed throughout the Nazi era. Attempting to rebuild the Germany that was, or, metaphorically speaking, returning home, is not a

viable option for those living in the postwar German era. Paradoxically, attempting to start anew, or considering May 8, 1945 to be a true Stunde Null, is equally impracticable. Stunde Null, which literally translates as "hour zero," is a term frequently applied to post-World War Two, post-Nazi era Germany. The idea that Germany could never be the same following the Holocaust is not without merit, and is indeed central to literary theories postulating that the unspeakable horror of this event necessitated a radical shift in the way in which we viewed art in relation to society. As I demonstrate throughout this thesis, however, Stunde Null may be something of a misnomer. Germany was not the same following the war, but in order to move beyond the devastation of the war, German citizens needed to consider the role that their past played in determining both their present and their future. To understand this thesis, we must follow Beckmann's path throughout the play.

The Outsider's protagonist, German soldier Beckmann, is "a man who comes home to Germany, one of many. One of the many who come home, but then don't come home, because there's no home for them any more" (53). We must remember that Beckmann, a Heimkehrer figure,[44] has lost years of his youth to fight for Germany. He has sacrificed both his mental and his physical health to fight in the war: The Outsider opens with his attempted suicide, and he is plagued by a war-wounded knee, and forced to peer through hideous "gas-mask glasses," his own spectacles having been shot to pieces (63). Given that Germany not only lost, but that its prewar ontology has been all but obliterated, one might well ask what that sacrifice was really for. Rather than being the haven he had hoped for, the Germany that Beckmann returns to is a horror. As

[44] An archetypal figure in postwar German literature, the Heimkehrer is a disillusioned soldier who returns to find his homeland destructed.

he tells his alter ego, The Other,[45] he might have been better off had he remained in the fields of war: "You see, I was away for three years. In Russia. And yesterday I came home again. And that's where I went wrong" (59). Beckmann's return to Germany is painful for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that it compounds his feelings of loss. He has lost his youth, his health, and of course the war; above all else, he has lost his own identity. For the past three years, Beckmann has fought to preserve a set of national ideals and protect a way of life; he has been a *German* soldier. If Germany is gone, then Beckmann's former self is too. This loss of self is made tangible in his recounting of the reunion with his wife:

> BECKMANN: Three years is quite a while, you know. And my wife called me Beckmann. Beckmann—plain and simple. Three years—and Beckmann is what she called me, as one calls a table, Table. Beckmann. A piece of furniture. Put it away, that Beckmann over there. So you see, that's why I don't have a Christian name anymore. (59)

In the course of World War Two and its aftermath, Beckmann has lost the most obvious signifier of his identity, his own name. Thus, the erasure of Germany has erased the German sense of self. Beckmann's self-proclaimed identity crisis is symbolic of the loss of self that he faces in the hellish Germany to which he has returned. Beyond this, the

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[45] In the *dramatis personae*, this character is cryptically described as 'The Other One, whom everyone knows." Given that Beckmann is the only character with whom The Other really interacts, and given that there are no indications that The Other is anything more than a disembodied voice, the "everyone" who knows him does not refer to the other characters in the play. This description is to be taken in a broader sense; *i.e.* the essence of The Other is something that all humans can recognize. Appearing at Beckmann's lowest moments in the play (e.g.: in Scene 1, just after the Elbe has rejected Beckmann as a suicide, or in Scene 2, after the Girl's husband returns to remind Beckmann of his guilt), The Other "functions as that which Christian terminology calls the conscience or that which folklore designates the guardian angel." (F. N. Mennemeier, quoted in Fickert, 36). The Other has similarly been interpreted as "the representative of Beckmann's will to live," and as Beckmann's companion on "an existential quest toward acceptance of himself" (Fickert, 36).

stability of language itself has been drawn into question if it has lost its referential function. If language, considered by countless theorists as the essential entry point into the realm of the real, has become ambiguous, then clearly the real itself has been drawn into question. When the eponymous "man outside" is no longer the referent of the word "Beckmann," language has lost its expected referential function. While this slippage may be less shocking if we are seeing the play performed in a theatre, or reading it as words on a page, we should remember that in its initial radio drama format, language is the only signifier we have. The dramatic space of The Outsider becomes an incredibly ambiguous arena, where we cannot trust anything to be real or absolute.

Reality, or the lack thereof, is also central to the dramaturgy of Korczak. The fact that a historically true story is being performed in a pointedly make-believe setting provides an ideal space in which to address this:

> NARRATOR: We're not talking about a play any more now.
>
> ACTRESS: Precisely.
>
> NARRATOR: We're talking about a man—a man named Janusz Korczak. We're not dealing with any made-up plots here; we're dealing with reality.
>
> FIRST ACTOR: How boring!
>
> ACTRESS: What is reality, after all?
>
> NARRATOR: A good question! (119)

Significantly, the Narrator, who is at this point the voice of authority in the play, does not pretend that he is in a position to determine what constitutes "reality," or truth. Instead, he merely agrees that the nature of reality needs to be probed, and indicates that the actors, in performing Korczak, will be the ones to do this. Because the Narrator has

already included the audience in the same dramatic space as the actors, they are clearly meant to address the question as well.

Although the plot is firmly rooted in historical fact, Korczak actually begins in a pointedly fictional setting. A Narrator appears onstage and addresses the audience directly:

> NARRATOR: [...] it's wartime in this play we're presenting tonight. Ah, you're startled, are you? Beginning to think of the price you paid for your ticket, perhaps? There's still time to get up and leave, you know. You're not involved yet in what we're going to show you here. (*After a long hard look at the audience.*) You're staying? Very well! (117)

The Narrator's ensuing exposition emphasizes that the facts of the story are not the most important thing that the audience will see. He says that the play is about Dr. Janusz Korczak, and about children who "had to die because they were Jewish children in Poland" (117), and concludes that this is "the story in a nutshell" (117). The Narrator offers the audience one more chance to leave:

> NARRATOR: You can still leave, you know; no one's forcing you to stay; no one forced you to come here in the first place. What's it to you what happened in Poland in 1940 and 1942? (117)

Having reminded the audience that they are indeed an audience, and having positioned them as willing participants in the play—they could have left twice now if they wanted to—the Narrator continues to talk about Janusz Korczak. He has already given us the "story in a nutshell," but it is significant that he continues his exposition. The nutshell encapsulation does not include anything that an audience cannot learn about Dr. Korczak

by turning to the historical record. However, as the Narrator continues, he begins to speak about what type of man Janusz Korczak was; not merely that he was kind, which is again something we could easily deduce from the historical record, but that he was a man who "loved and never lied. He lied just once in his life—and then he did it for love" (117). This is the type of statement that an audience could not have verified as being absolutely true; it is a matter of perception. The Narrator's praise suggests that Dr. Korczak's single lie was justified, but this judgment is subjective. The audience will be forced to make such evaluations for themselves, and this process of considering and reconsidering the story of Janusz Korczak in order to arrive at the truth is, beyond the nutshell, what the play is about.

Often credited with the introduction of metatheatrics into twentieth century drama, Pirandellian drama demonstrates the relativity of truth, showing how objective reality is impossible because the individual's relationship to the world is inevitably the product of his or her unique perception of it. Humanity's pretense that there *can* be a single truth which unifies and provides meaning is both arrogant and tragic; as Pirandello said of his own work:

> I think that life is a very sad piece of buffoonery; because we have in ourselves, without being able to know why, wherefore or whence, the need to deceive ourselves constantly by creating a reality (one for each and never the same for all), which from time to time is discovered to be vain and illusory . . . My art is full of bitter compassion for all those who deceive themselves; but this compassion cannot fail to be followed by the ferocious derision of destiny which condemns man to deception. (Pirandello, Luigi. entry at <www.britannica.com>)

Pirandello often highlights the unreality of the real world by blurring the barrier between art and life. One would presume that the former was less real than the latter, but in Pirandello, art is portrayed as something that has a definite, concrete existence; life is uncertain because it is always in flux. With art being more real than reality, audiences are forced to question their assumption that they themselves are any more real than the art before them (see also page 69).

Sylvanus' Korczak is Pirandello with a twist. Whereas the overtly fictional designs of Pirandello's Questa Sera si Recita a Soggeto (Tonight We Improvise), and Sei Personagi (Six Characters in Search of an Author)[46] encourage audiences to ponder the nature of reality in an abstract, intellectualized way, the historically based tale of Korczak makes the questioning of reality more pointed. Sylvanus ultimately gets audiences to consider the same question that Pirandello does: should human beings accept the notion of an absolute, all-encompassing truth, or an unwavering version of reality? This metaquestion, however, is reached by questioning the nature of one very specific truth: that of Dr. Janusz Korczak, a Polish Jew who "never lied" (Sylvanus 117). Told from the start that Dr. Korczak was a scrupulously honest man, the audience realizes that Sylvanus is not drawing the facts of his story into question, but rather their perception of these. This distinction is important; Korczak touches on a very sensitive history, including not merely World War Two, but the German treatment of Jews during the war. The hard facts of the matter—that the historical Dr. Korczak attempted to save the lives of Jewish children by contravening direct German orders to send them to the death camps —are

[46] The first of these might actually relate most closely to what Sylvanus does in Korczak, although Six Characters is certainly the better known of these plays. While Six Characters directs its questions inwards, to a director and an absent writer, Tonight We Improvise involves the audience quite directly, as Korczak does.

certain. What is open to debate is how Dr. Korczak's, and how the German soldier's, actions are perceived. While postwar German audiences might have preferred a story with clearly delineated right and wrong, or victim and villain, this is not the play that Sylvanus has written.

Although I was not able to attend the LSU International Cultural Center's 2002 production of Korczak, or to contact those involved, the show may be accessed via a Web-based archive of slides.[47] These slides actually constitute a production unto themselves, since they consist not merely of photographic images from the live production, but include text of the dialogue spoken at the moments captured by the photos. These photos, along with their text, have been superimposed over a distorted sepia image, which appears to be derived from a photo of one of the Warsaw ghettos. Not every moment of the play is documented by the archive; presumably the members of the production team who assembled it chose images and dialogue that seemed essential to the production as a whole. This process of selection, along with artistic details such as the superimposition I have described, offers insight into the aesthetics of the LSU production.

The tenth slide in the forty-five-slide-long-show[48] shows the empty stage, a thrust configuration in a brick auditorium. The set is devoid of dressing, save for a map of the world which hangs in the background, and an array of international flags suspended from the ceiling. Given that "Dr. Korczak and the Children: A Story of One's Life, Love, and Death" was staged in the LSU International Center, it is likely that these ornamentations

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[47]Sylvanus, Erwin. Dr. Korczak and the Children. Dir. Alexander Tselebrovski. LSU International Cultural Centre, Baton Rouge LA. 6-11 Nov. 2002. "Dr. Korczak and the Children: A Story of One's Life, Love, and Death." <www.lsu.edu/icc/theatre/korczak.pdf> 15 Mar. 2003.

[48] The first nine slides are essentially program notes, consisting of production information.

were there independent of the show; nonetheless, it is fitting that they remained present as reminders that Korczak is not just the story of one man, but rather of all humankind. Slide thirteen, which shows the Narrator asking the audience, "What's it to you what happened in Poland in 1942? It's a long way from here to Poland" (117), illustrates the effectiveness of the slide presentation. It *is* a long way from "here"—in my case, an office in Canada in 2003—to 1942 Poland, but due to the arresting image of Warsaw in the background, I have already been transported there in a sense. The distortion of the Warsaw image offers a sense of surreality, appropriate given that it is from a place and time that I cannot really access. This backdrop draws the stark realism of the slide's main photo—the actor portraying the Narrator standing onstage in 2002 Louisiana—into sharp relief. One might argue that I, as a viewer of the slide show rather than the actual production, did not have access to the actor's place and time any more than I did to1942 Warsaw. Accessing the production via the Internet, however, actually reinforced Sylvanus' message that Korczak is simultaneously a play about one man in 1942 Poland, and a play about us all. As I have discussed in Chapter Two, Sylvanus employed the dramatic techniques of Luigi Pirandello to draw the audience into the world of the play, and cause them to question whether their own reality in 1957 Germany was any more real than the world depicted onstage. Given the ease with which I was able to access an event that took place in Louisiana in 2002, and given my instinctive response to this event (*i.e.* the photographed moments of the play) as real, it seems ludicrous to claim that the events depicted in the play are made inaccessible by my spatial and temporal separation from them.[49] The effect of the Internet on the globalization of the modern world is clearly

[49] I must wonder how attending the Baton Rouge production live would impact my perception of the play and ability to access reality, and how this experience would compare to viewing the play via the Internet.

beyond the scope of this study, but suffice it to say that this coincidentally illuminates one of Korczak's central issues: an individual does not necessarily need to be present at an event to access it, or even to become engaged in it.

Korczak engages audiences by opening with "Actors" as opposed to characters in order to emphasize the fact that the play is posing questions which pertain to humanity, not just to the individuals directly involved in the tale. After the Second Actor, in the role of Dr. Korczak, tells the story of his father's watch, the Narrator must explain why such a highly personal story is an essential piece of something far greater. By sharing the story, "Dr. Korczak" has revealed the foundation for his entire system of values:

> NARRATOR: Now I understand why you've told us this story.
>
> SECOND ACTOR: I made up my mind then and there to take the rabbi as a model for my future conduct: never to become angry at human weakness, only at those who would force me to lie. And I have stuck to that code.
>
> FIRST ACTOR: I must say—this play is getting a bit too high class for me. I can hardly recognize my friend here any more. He talks as if he had invented truth all by himself.
>
> NARRATOR: He is trying to find out what it is that goes to make up truth. He's still your friend at the same time that you're hearing the voice of Janusz Korczak speaking...and we...
>
> FIRST ACTOR: I didn't hear the voice of Janusz Korczak: I heard the voice of the actor... (123)

The story that the First Actor is questioning was not scripted by the Narrator, and was in

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As I was able to do only the latter, however, this speculation strikes me as interesting but idle.

fact something that the Second Actor insists upon adding to the play. In this sense, the First Actor is right—the voice he has heard has been that of the actor, not the historically verifiable voice of the real Dr. Korczak. However, Dr. Korczak's voice has been present as well, heard in the Second Actor's perception of the man, and his own belief that this story is essential if the others are to understand the Korczak character. Thus, the Narrator is also right when he tells the First Actor that both Janusz Korczak and his portrayer are present on the stage; the truth that Sylvanus is trying to get at in the play can only be reached by the subjective interpretation of the bare facts of history. Truth in Korczak is a product of perception, so the audience also plays an essential role in the dramaturgy of the play.

A look at reception history would be the logical next step to take in advancing the discussion of how dramaturgy functions in relations to audiences of The Outsider and Korczak. I have illustrated the ways in which Borchert and Sylvanus position spectators as participants in the plays; it would be illuminating to consider the ways in which different audiences have responded to this tactic. In the case of The Outsider, I have shown how audiences' own proximity to the trauma lead to strong critical responses, both in praise and in disapproval of the play. Meaning in Korczak, even more so than in The Outsider, is the product of audience perception of the play, and so a study of Korczak's reception at various times and places would be especially useful. While my own efforts here were surely hampered by the fact that I was working in English, consultation with German experts has lead me to conclude that documents concerning the production history of Korczak are scarce at best. This gap may be due largely to the ephemeral

nature of live theatrical performance, but I am hopeful that future scholars will address it.

CHAPTER FIVE

Trauma: Stages of Resolution

In order to evaluate whether or not The Outsider and Korczak do indeed succeed as tools of reflection and of intervention in a post-traumatic culture, I will examine each play in relation to the theoretical framework established in Chapter Three. Bearing meaningful witness to a traumatic past is a complex process, but the ability of each play to do so pivots on one overriding concern: how effectively do Borchert and Sylvanus illustrate the necessity of utilizing private memories in order to witness the public trauma of Germany's past? To phrase this another way, are The Outsider and Korczak able to demonstrate to audiences that society cannot progress beyond the inhumanity of World War Two unless each individual is willing to bear faithful witness to his or her own role in the trauma? To answer this question, I have found it useful to break my analysis of the plays into three sub-headings: Choice, Guilt, and Ownership. These headings, and the chronology of them, is illustrative of the essential stages which I see Germany moving through as it begins to deal with the trauma of World War Two. Please note that in Chapter Four, I dealt with the first stage of this process, which is recognition of the reality of the trauma itself.

Choice

Borchert and Sylvanus brought their first (German) audiences back to the atrocities of the Second World War not because they wished them to agonize over what role each individual did, did not, ought to have, or attempted to play as a silent partner in the Third Reich. Rather, they did so to allow individual to re-examine their behaviour from a safe distance.

Janusź Korczak's actions made him a larger-than-life figure even before he was immortalized in Sylvanus' play; indeed a magazine article that Sylvanus had read on the man provided inspiration. Dr. Korczak's actions made him as good, or better than, any character Sylvanus could have invented to address the issues that concerned him as a humanist in post-World War Two Germany. At its heart, Korczak is concerned with one key question: was it possible to live by the values of basic humanity during the Third Reich? A society in which children are shuttled to gas chambers is clearly a society that no longer operates according to the laws of reality as they had been known in the prewar era. After the ghettoization of Poland, and whilst thousands upon thousand of Jews were being herded to the death camps—fit men and women, the elderly, and children, not just plausible "enemies" of Germany—something essentially human had clearly been lost forever. In Korczak, Sylvanus questions just what codes humans are to, or are able to, live by in such a world. In a scene I have outlined in Chapter Four, the Actress wonders just what constitutes reality, and receives no answer at all. In one of the final scenes of the play, the question is repeated:

> FIRST ACTOR (*flaring up*): Dr. Korczak! (*With weary stubbornness.*) Orders are orders and obedience is obedience.

SECOND ACTOR (*with unearthly calm*): And what is reality?

FIRST ACTOR: My orders!—and they're going to be carried out now, without any further delay. (153)

The Officer's orders are indeed one possible answer as to what constitutes reality, as at this point in the play, it is the only reality to which he himself can relate. However, the Narrator's earlier non-response to the Actress is equally valid. Orders may be reality for the Officer, but they clearly are not for Dr. Korczak, whose own conception of reality is based more on divine commandments. Rather than providing answers to the critical question of reality, Sylvanus' play leaves it as a matter for the audience to decide. Each audience member, based in no small part upon the choice that he or she might make if faced with such a question, must determine his or her own answer.

The Doctor epitomizes 'Choice' in Korczak, a concept leading back to one's own perception of reality, when the German Officer issues the orders that might save his life:

FIRST ACTOR: The moving operation will begin in three hours. I shall return at that time. There are guards in front of the house. I rely on you, Dr. Korczak!

SECOND ACTOR: What am I going to do? I'm curious to know, really, what I'm going to do. I wonder if I really know just what my situation is. It's like a dream, a horrible dream; but I'm not dreaming—and that's more horrible yet.... Sister Ruth! [...] You cannot imagine the strength I have now. Listen carefully, now. The orphanage is being evacuated. You...you are released from your duties.

ACTRESS: You're not serious?

SECOND ACTOR: All of the nurses will be released. At seven o'clock tonight. [...] you must go.

ACTRESS: You're not talking sense, Doctor. You're weak from hunger.

SECOND ACTOR: I'm talking quite clearly and precisely; and I am giving you a quite clear and precise order to help the children to... (147)

In contravening the Officer's orders, Dr. Korczak has effectively chosen freedom for the nurses, at the cost of his own survival. This choice, and the moment at which Beckmann's soldiers also ignore a superior's orders, are but two examples of the many moments of choice in each play. Although both playwrights demonstrate that such choices did exist, the fact that choices may not have been readily apparent in the midst of World War Two is unambiguously conveyed as well. Audiences of The Outsider and Korczak are never in a position to change the outcome of the choices made by Beckmann's soldiers or by Dr. Korczak, so the question they are faced with is not, "How can I do **X** differently to lead to a more positive outcome?" but rather, "What were my reasons for doing **X**?" The immediate task put to the audience is not to make different choices, but to understand why previous choices were made.

Borchert and Sylvanus take care to highlight the "**X**"s, or pivotal moments of choice, in the plays. To use the above-noted example from Korczak, we are made to see that the choice one might make depends upon who is choosing. Let us call the question facing Dr. Korczak at that one moment point **X**: should I follow orders and have my Nurses board the train to Treblinka? This is a real (*i.e.* tangible) moment in Sylvanus' narrative, and its existence cannot be questioned—Dr. Korczak did have occasion to confront the moment. If point **X** is tangibly real, however, it is also ephemerally virtual

as well. We are made to see that the nature of point **X** is dependent upon who is observing it. Dr. Korczak's choice to disobey orders and allow the nurses to escape is predicated by his own unique perception of point **X**. It is dictated by his spirituality, and his conviction that "one must never lie—that's the main thing" (125). However, even he recognizes that not everyone may share his values: "Perhaps only a Jew can understand" (123). Although Judaism is not necessarily the determinant factor, we are provided with a contrasting set of values when the German Officer explains why he made his own choice to follow the secular laws of the Nazi Party:

> FIRST ACTOR (*forcefully*): I refuse to have my character blackened by you. It isn't right! You want to go directly into the scene that shows me acting out my orders now. Well, I protest! I'm a man too. I've got a wife that I love.
>
> NARRATOR: And children. And a little dog named Waldi and, above all, a home. All right, let's be just. We'll show you at home on furlough. We'll show you as a man, as you put it. As the head of a family. [...] You're on furlough now, and you want to be a husband and a father. The Poles are no business of yours, least of all the Jews! You've got no time to feel sorry for inferior races! This is war! We're fighting for the future of the German people, for our thousand-year pan-Germanic empire!
>
> FIRST ACTOR: Those theories were not developed by me.
>
> NARRATOR: No, but they're tolerated by you.
>
> FIRST ACTOR: You can say what you like: we got something done in those years. [...] Christianity had plenty of time to make people different, but it wasn't able to. The Church didn't give a damn about us—nobody gave a damn about us.

> So we had to do it ourselves—and it was the Nazis showed [sic] us how to do it. It's easy enough to preach morality on a full belly—so first we decided to fill *our* bellies. (125; excerpts on production slides 20, 21, 24)

Although Janusz Korczak makes the choices that are more ethically appealing in the light of postwar scrutiny, the German Officer makes the choices that many German citizens actually did make, albeit many of them in more moderate ways. Sylvanus' dramaturgy permits the audience to see that each individual is entitled to his or her own perception of this moment. One spectator may look at the moment and see a situation where disobeying orders was not an option: Dr. Korczak ought to have followed German law, not acted according to his own beliefs. Another may look at it and see a situation where following this relatively minor order would actually allow Dr. Korczak greater freedom to disobey major orders further down the road. A third may believe that Dr. Korczak ought to have followed the orders because they were just. The number of perceptions of point **X** is infinite, thus although point **X** itself has a fixed nature, it also has an infinite number of virtual natures as well. Dr. Korczak's mental conception of point **X** is one of these, but there is no way for us to say that it is any more or less valid than those of each audience member's apprehension of point **X**.[50]

Extrapolating beyond the examples I have used above, we can see that the multiplicity of perceptions—and the potential validity of each of these—is central to what Borchert and Sylvanus are attempting to reveal to post-World War Two German audiences. History has brought these audiences to a point **X**; here let us call it the

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[50] I am indebted here to Deleuze's work on 'actual' and 'virtual' realities. For a brief overview of the "Borgesian map" (here simplified to "point **X**"), see Eleanor Kaufman's introduction to Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998. For a more comprehensive text, refer to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987.

physical, cultural, and psychological landscape of postwar Germany. In the case of The Outsider, this is the home to which Beckmann returns, paralleled by the environment facing his 1946 audiences. In the case of Korczak, this is the Germany of 1957, in which the play is being performed. For this reason, the actuality of point **X** is not in question—the Allied forces have defeated Germany, Hitler is dead but so are millions of Jews, Germany is in architectural, cultural, and political chaos, and the nation has been vilified by the world. However, each audience member has a perception of point **X** which is inherently unique, and so these mental conceptions of actual events form a second layer of reality. Thanks to the distance from *both* layers of reality that Borchert and Sylvanus' metatheatrical dramaturgy provides, audiences are able to assess, as well as to question, the impact that various perspectives on point **X** had, and continue to have, in the wake of the tangible moments of World War Two. By revealing the existence of alternate perspectives, Borchert and Sylvanus question the validity of a singular Real, or an absolute Truth. This questioning of such concepts which seemed absolute before World War Two is a necessary step in the Germans' bearing witness to the trauma of the war. By recognizing that Germany and the world were fundamentally altered by events so horrific that they are beyond the bounds of human comprehension, The Outsider and Korczak allow audiences to honour the one truth that remains certain, the truth of the war's victims and of their suffering.

Guilt

Following the questioning of truth and reality after the devastation of the Third Reich, the recognition of their own role in this tragedy was a necessary second step that postwar German citizens needed to take. In the case of The Outsider, we may see this process at work as Beckmann progresses through the world of the play. The question of German guilt is only partially addressed by Borchert, in his early phase of returning to the trauma of World War Two. In Chapter Four, I have detailed a scene in which Mrs. Kramer offers her views on Nazism and the Jews. Beckmann does not endorse Mrs. Kramer's views; to his fault he does not counter them with opposing views of his own. In fact, Beckmann has nothing at all to say about either the Nazis or the Jews. He is deeply, even obsessively, concerned with the fate of World War Two's victims, but for Beckmann, these victims are the German soldiers who fought for a seeming eternity only to return 'home' and discover that it all may have been for naught. Initially, he counts himself a victim; he has survived the war, but he "can't bear anything [on earth] anymore" (57). In Scene 1, the first episode of the play-proper, Beckmann's self-pity is still evident when he meets "the Girl, whose husband came home on one leg" (*dramatis personae* 52). This Girl tries to help the despondent, soggy Beckmann, offering him simple kindness and some dry clothes. The jacket she offers him is too big; it turns out that it belonged to her missing husband:

> GIRL: The giant is my husband—was my husband. [He was] starved, frozen, killed —how should I know? He's been missing since Stalingrad. It's been three years.

(64)

The mention of Stalingrad triggers Beckmann's memory; as we learn later, he was stationed there, and the Girl's husband was one of those under his command. Rather than being grateful that he has survived and returned when it is clear so many others have not, Beckmann replies:

> BECKMANN (*stunned*): Stalingrad? In Stalingrad, yes. Yes, many were killed in Stalingrad. But some come back again. And they put on the clothes of those who don't. The man who was your husband, the giant, who owns these clothes, he was left lying there. And I, I come back now and put them on. That's wonderful, isn't it? Isn't that wonderful? And his jacket's so big I practically drown in it. (*Hurriedly.*) I must take it off. Right. I must put on my own wet one. This jacket's killing me. It's choking me, this jacket. I'm a joke in this jacket. A dirty, vulgar joke, made by the war. No—I won't wear this jacket.
>
> (65)

Beckmann's concern with the fit of a jacket in the face of the Girl's sorrow at having lost the husband whom it fit is certainly self-indulgent. Upon closer analysis, though, it is not quite as callous as first it seems.

The jacket itself is not the problem; the problem is what the jacket represents. Knowing that he was the one who left its owner "lying there" in the trenches of Stalingrad, the jacket becomes burdensome to Beckmann. As a dramatist, Borchert has the advantage of using visual symbols to help his audience understand Beckmann's turmoil. The moral weight of being alive to wear the jacket is epitomized by the physical weight of actually wearing it. When Beckmann tries to dodge the weight of the jacket by

refusing to wear it, an apparition confronts him. The jacket's rightful owner appears, at least in spirit, and demands to know why Beckmann, the comrade who left him in Stalingrad, is now "In [his] clothes? In [his] place? With [his] wife?" (66). Beckmann counters that he had the same experience yesterday, when he attempted to return to *his* clothes, his home, and his wife:

> BECKMANN (*almost mumbling, and stumbling for words*): That's what I asked the man who was with *my* wife last night. In my shirt. In my bed. What are you doing here? I asked. And he shrugged his shoulders and let them fall again and said: "Yes, what am I doing here?" That's what he answered. Then I shut the bedroom door again—no, first I put out the light again. And then I was outside. (66)

Beckmann justifies his presence in the fallen soldier's home by pointing out that he has been stung by this very betrayal himself. The difference, however, is that Beckmann lived to experience it. One could argue that Beckmann suffered a greater affront, given that he was actually alive and present to reclaim a place that was denied to him. Indeed, Beckmann feels that the life he has returned to is more unjust than death—recall how, in The Dream, he cites the fact that his "bed's been taken" (57) as one of the reasons the Elbe should let him die. The life that Beckmann has returned to is undeniably less than he, a soldier who has given so much to his nation, deserves. His petulant responses when confronted with the challenges this postwar life presents are often narcissistic and even childish; perhaps this is what the Elbe means when she calls him a "damp-behind-the-ears beginner" (57), and tells him that he needs to "live a little" (58) before she might consider allowing him to die. Beckmann suffered as a result of World War Two.

However, Beckmann also caused a great deal of suffering, and this is the truth that he needs to face before he can rest in peace, either in life or in death. Beckmann is cognizant of this truth in the scene with the jacket, but he runs away before he actually confronts it.

The sense of exclusion inherent in Borchert's title is directly related to the fact that Beckmann has no home and thus no self to return to. The metaphorical image of a man standing outside a door that he is never allowed to enter resonates in each of Beckmann's encounters with other characters in the play. When the Elbe rejects his suicide, Beckmann is denied access to the relief he presumes he will find in death.[51] In Scene 2, his attempt to find this comfort in the company of the Girl is also denied, when the return of her maimed husband reminds Beckmann that he cannot interact with another human being in the manner that he had before the war, because his actions have changed him. Beckmann is not entitled to the Girl's kindness, because he still has not taken any responsibility, thus has not shown any remorse, for the fact that these actions cost his fellow German soldiers their lives. This reminder of why dying presently seems preferable to living prompts Beckmann to turn towards the Elbe again; this time, his entrance is blocked by The Other:

> BECKMANN: (*screaming*): [...] I'm not. I'm not that anymore. I won't be Beckmann any more [sic]!
>
> (*He runs out. A door creaks and slams shut. Then the wind is heard, and a man running through the silent streets.)*
>
> THE OTHER: Stop! Beckmann!

[51] Here is another of Borchert's (conscious?) engagements with World literature, as Beckmann faces the same predicament which challenged Shakespeare's Hamlet, and Goethe's Faust.

BECKMANN: Who's there?

THE OTHER: I. The other one. [...]

BECKMANN: What do you want? Let me past.

THE OTHER: No, Beckmann. That path leads to the Elbe. Come, the road's up here.

BECKMANN: Let me by. I want the Elbe.

THE OTHER: No, Beckmann. Come. You want this road. (67)

Forced to choose the path leading to life, Beckmann decides that this will only be bearable if he can rid himself of the guilt provoked by the One Legged soldier's return. At The Other's suggestion, Beckmann pays a visit to 'the Colonel,' in order to "give the responsibility back to him" (68):

BECKMANN: We'll pay somebody a visit? Yes, let's do that. And I'll give the responsibility back to him. Yes, we'll do that. I want a night's sleep without cripples. I'll give it back to him. Yes! I'll take the responsibility right back to him! Yes, come, we'll pay somebody a visit, a certain somebody who lives in a nice warm house. In this town, in every town. We'll pay a man a visit, we want to give him a present—a dear, sweet, brave man, who his whole life long has only done his duty, always his duty! But it was a cruel duty! It was a frightful duty! A cursed—cursed duty! Come on now! Come on! (68)

An intriguing hierarchy of guilt is established by Beckmann's desire to confront the Colonel. In doing so, he will be shadowing the actions of the man he has just left; this man was Beckmann's wartime subordinate, just as Beckmann was the Colonel's. As I have stated above, the difference between this man and Beckmann, both of whom

returned 'home' to discover that they no longer had a place, is that Beckmann returned alive, while the man returned only in spirit. Beckmann knows that he is responsible for what happened to the man, but because he feels that he is equally a victim, he needs to find someone to blame *both* of their misfortunes on. A soldier in Beckmann's charge has just returned responsibility to him; Beckmann in turn heads to his own superior for absolution.

Scene 3 finds Beckmann temporarily *inside* the door of the Colonel's warm, comfortable home, but ends with him "out in the street again" (78). Access to a comfortable life in postwar Germany is denied to Beckmann, because he cannot ignore his guilt, as the Colonel advises:

> COLONEL: My dear young friend, you're completely distorting the whole business, you know. We're all Germans—after all! Let's stick to good old German truth, my dear fellow. He who believes in the truth fights best—that's what General Clausewitz says. (70)

The "good old German truth"—that everything he has spent the war fighting for was righteous, or at least enough so that whatever actions he took were justified—is the most impenetrable of all the doors standing between Beckmann and a sense of peace, or of belonging. The Colonel has been able to return 'home' following the war, because the Colonel believes that fighting in it was necessary. For him, it is honourable to have fought for Germany, and so his sense of self has not been obliterated in the way that Beckmann's has. The Colonel's reference to "what General Clausewitz says" is essentially the same defense that many Germans claimed at Nuremberg; whatever actions were taken were justified, because they fulfilled a superior's orders. We see Beckmann

try to dodge moral responsibility via this same response, when he goes to the Colonel so that he can return the responsibility, but ultimately Beckmann finds that the guilt remains with him. Beckmann knows that he cannot justify his actions by passing them up the chain of command to whomever it was declaring these "good old German truths," because these truths did not actually exist. If the war itself was not justified, then clearly the actions Beckmann took in the name of it are morally flawed as well. Though I believe that Borchert has shaped his play so that we might see this last point, and might also remember that for Germans like Beckmann choices did exist, the question of guilt and agency is highly complex when considering ordinary German soldiers. For the majority of these men, who were just cogs in the overpowering wheel of Nazism, the freedom to chose one's course of action was necessarily influenced by more than what we as outside observers might consider basic morality. The German Officer in Korczak, an ordinary soldier, perhaps much like Beckmann, provides an excellent illustration of why the choice that seems right to us today was not necessarily the rational choice for the soldier facing it during the Third Reich.

The Colonel, who lives in a warm, comfortable home, with plenty of food and drink, and the good health and family with which to enjoy it, is an appealing repository for this floating 'responsibility,' which no one wants to claim. While outward appearances indicate that he has not suffered as Beckmann and the other man have, the Colonel has clearly not addressed the question of responsibility himself. The Colonel is not tormented by guilt, but this is because he has convinced himself that there is nothing to feel guilty about. On a conscious level, Beckmann has also failed to address the question of guilt. Beckmann knows that he is responsible for what happened to those left

behind in Stalingrad; if this were not the case, neither the jacket nor its owner would have troubled him. When he first discusses Stalingrad with the Colonel, however, Beckmann reverts to casting himself as the victim:

> COLONEL: Come on now, confess, you broke in someplace, right? And they caught you, right?
>
> BECKMANN: Quite right, sir. Helped break in somewhere. Into Stalingrad, Sir. But the job got bungled, and they nabbed us. We were sent up for three years, the whole hundred thousand of us. And our head man put on civvies and ate caviar. Three years of caviar! And the others lay under the snow with the sand of the steppes in their mouths. And we just went on spooning hot water from our soup bowls. But our head man had to eat caviar. (70)

Based upon what we know regarding Beckmann's experience of war at this point in the play, his account to the Colonel is not exactly false. He did spend three years in Stalingrad, from the sounds of it, as a Prisoner of War. Given the physical state in which he has returned to Germany—with a bristly, recently shaven head (56), with a limp and a rumbling stomach (57), and wearing gas-mask glasses in place of the glasses that were shot to pieces (63)—we can hardly doubt that Beckmann was one of those who spooned hot water rather than savoured caviar. However, even if Beckmann is not lying by fact at this point, it strikes us that he may well be lying by omission. He has implicated the Colonel in his suffering—it seems safe to presume that the Colonel ate caviar—but he has made no mention of his own role in the greater suffering of the man from Scene 2. Not knowing, or caring, about this omission, the Colonel nonetheless offers Beckmann a way out of the responsibility he seems determine to place. To the Colonel's way of

thinking, it is ridiculous to try to lay the blame for the suffering of war with any one man, regardless of whether that man is Beckmann or himself.

When the Colonel tells Beckmann that all that matters is "good old German truth," he offers him a chance to abandon the confession he has begun, the one that has brought him to the Colonel's door. By refusing to accept the blame Beckmann has tried to return to him, the senior officer has offered Beckmann absolution as well. If the horrors he has set in place are, as the Colonel implies, just the consequences of "good old German truth," then Beckmann is not responsible because he could not have acted in any other way. Beckmann rejects the objectivity accorded to him by this "German truth," denouncing it as a game the guilty play so that they may sleep at night. He has not fully accepted his own role as a subject who freely gave men orders that resulted in their deaths; this guilt is still projected onto the monster haunting his dreams. Beckmann's nightmares, however, are themselves the place where the factual and objective meet their fateful intersection with the fictional and subjective. The former are the details of Beckmann's guilt: he was given command of a troop of twenty soldiers, and while in his charge, eleven of them were lost. The fiction is in part Beckmann's unconscious manifestation of the guilt in the skeletal soldier who plays a xylophone made of bones, and in part the "German truth" that has prevented him from accepting responsibility for the eleven men thus far. These two layers of reality cross when Beckmann tells the Colonel that he cannot sleep because of the "concert on the bone xylophone," which reminds him every night that "the responsibility was [his]." By refusing to be placated by the Colonel's offer of "German truth," Beckmann is finally able to consider himself as an agent of his own actions. This is painful, but it is necessary if he wants to take ownership

of his own actions so that he might both forgive himself and be forgiven by his confessor, and thereby escape the trap of unresolved guilt.

Korczak also addresses the question of guilt, but it does so in a less direct manner than does The Outsider. While the ways in which Beckmann recognizes and deals with his guilt may be noted by specific textual references, the text of Korczak makes few, if any, such direct references to the issue. There are moments such as the one I have quoted earlier, when the First Actor defends the actions he took in the name of Nazism, which are denials of guilt. To some extent, the scene I have quoted from early in the play, when the actors complain that they do not want to participate in a "problem play," is also a denial of guilt, as they, postwar gentiles, clearly do no feel that what happened to Jews during the war is an issue which concerns them. However, Sylvanus' dramaturgy, which situates the audience firmly within the play, means that the question of guilt is one which is ultimately put to them. By the end of Korczak, it has been established that Janusz Korczak's conscience, and his set of values, are determined by his faith in God. In contrast, the German Officer's conscience dictates that he follow the orders of his superiors. The two systems of belief counter each other late in the play, as the Officer prepares to send Dr. Korczak and his children to Treblinka:

> NARRATOR: And now Janusz Korczak is alone—quite, quite alone—together with his God. He stands before his God not only in heart and in spirit, but as a complete human being; and his body moves and trembles and his voice rises up, for he is unable to control his emotion. He brings unto his God all his fear and distress; and his body sways with ever greater agitation as he sings and prays. The officer stands at attention and hears his orders repeated. He sees the picture

of the Führer hanging behind his commanding officer and his mind becomes cleansed of everything but his orders. The orders are his conscience—the only conscience that he possesses. He raises his hand and says:

FIRST ACTOR: Heil Hitler! I am ready. We follow and obey.

NARRATOR: And as he speaks these words, indifferently exchanging his humanity for the orders he has been given, he hears his comrades singing, "Forward, forward, ever forward, till the world shall crumble beneath our feet." At the same time Janusz Korczak stops his singing and praying and says:

SECOND ACTOR: O God and God of my Fathers, I would keep Thy commands and not grow weak; for I am one of Your people. I am ready and I obey.

NARRATOR: And as he says these words it seems to him as if he can hear his brothers singing in the synagogue these words: "I lift my eyes up to the mountains from whence my Savior shall come!" And as Janusz Korczak leaves his room—and as the officer leaves his commander's room—each one says once more softly to himself:

FIRST AND SECOND ACTORS (*meet in the middle and say simultaneously*): I am ready. (150)

As Sylvanus has told us in his opening stage directions, he "has not invented the events depicted in this play: he has merely recorded them" (116). And, as he has also told us all along, neither Janusz Korczak nor the German Officer are actually present; the actors are merely playing these roles. Because Korczak does not purport to be anything more than a report of history, it makes sense that Sylvanus has not passed judgment on the actions that Dr. Korczak and the German Officer took. He has, in the above-quoted scene,

focused an audience's attention on why both men made the choices that they did. The question of guilt, however, is left to Sylvanus' spectators to decide. While Sylvanus seems to favour the actions of Janusz Korczak, as when he writes that the Officer has "exchang[ed] his humanity for the orders he has been given," the playwright never actually condones Korczak's actions, just as he does not condemn the Officers. Guilt, like much else in Korczak, is not of a tangible nature, but rather a product of perception. If I, as an audience member, assign guilt to the Officer, then this says just as much about me, and my own system of values, as it does about him. Given that I have been told why it was that the Officer did the things he did, I must also ask myself whether I, in his place, would have had the courage to behave differently. By forcing his audience to participate in the play in such a significant way, Sylvanus also forces them to participate in the events of 1942 Poland, not physically, of course, but in spirit.

Ownership

The fourth and final step that Germans needed to take in their address of the trauma of World War Two is a logical progression of the third. Having recognized that the Nazis alone were not responsible for the trauma their nation had endured, Germans had to share in the burden of this displaced guilt. By taking ownership of their actions, and acknowledging the consequences of the choices that they had made during the Nazi era, Germans were finally in a position to bear witness to the full scope of the tragedy. To reiterate, this scope was limited by Borchert's close proximity to the trauma in 1946; it could not be considered in its entirety until more time had passed, as it had by 1957. In 1946, Germany was only in a position to witness the war; by 1957, there was a growing cognizance of the need to witness the ideology that had fueled it as well. I will examine the ways in which both The Outsider and Korczak position their audiences to take ownership, and thus bear faithful witness to the trauma of World War Two.

The Outsider displays a hyper-awareness of the ordinary German citizen—represented by Beckmann—as both a victim and an agent of the lost war. The play does not allow Beckmann to wallow in self-pity; he is a victim of World War Two, but he was also an active and willful participant:

> BECKMANN: I can't go back to sleep again, because I had assumed command, because I had assumed the responsibility. Yes, the responsibility was mine. (74)

Unfortunately, Borchert does not (and cannot—see Chapter Three, and my comments below regarding limitation imposed by Borchert's close proximity to the trauma) lead his

protagonist towards a full understanding of what it is that he bears the responsibility for. Although Beckmann agonizes over the choices he made, ones which cost men their lives, the victims he mourns are German soldiers. To be fair, these men are most likely the only victims that Beckmann, as an ordinary German soldier who appears to have spent much of his time as a Prisoner of War (see my observations in Chapter Five, subheading Guilt) was ever in a position to see. In 1946, it is not even plausible that Borchert himself could have realized the full extent of what the war had cost the Jews and other targets of Nazi persecution.[52] Even if his understanding of the trauma is incomplete, Beckmann's claim to victimhood is by no means groundless. As a young man coming of age in the prime of Nazism, history placed him in a terrible position. Faced with choices that no one should ever have to make, it is commendable that Beckmann is able to take ownership of what he chose to do in these situations. However, if we allow Beckmann to view himself as a victim, we must keep in mind that he was at most a victim of circumstance, and that his ultimate crisis was one of conscience and not of survival.

The challenge that Borchert presents Beckmann, and postwar audiences, with is that of creating a new German identity, first by accounting for their own actions. Postwar Germans cannot just give up—symbolized in the play by Beckmann's failed suicide attempt—because this just isn't an option for Germany's political and ontological problems. The nation lost the war; the old way of German life and the old German identity is gone. Perhaps this is for the best, as Borchert acknowledges via Beckmann's confrontation with the Colonel, but it is traumatic nonetheless. Right now (*i.e.* Stunde

[52] To draw a modern parallel, the Occidental world today, positioned as we are less than a year after the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, still largely recognizes only what the regime has cost our own citizens and soldiers, and has at best a vague comprehension of what both the regime and Western intervention have cost the Middle East.

Null) is the German's chance to move forward and create a new identity; without this, Germany can have no future.

Thrown out the Colonel's door, Beckmann finds a brief respite in alcohol: "This booze has saved my life, my brains are submerged, I'm soused. Down the hatch!" (78). He drunkenly comes around to the Colonel's life-embracing point of view:

> BECKMANN: No, those people are right. Are we supposed to sit around and think about Death, when he's right on our heels? Down the hatch! Those people are right. The dead are piling up over our heads. Ten million yesterday. Today—thirty million. Tomorrow somebody's going to come along and blow up an entire continent. By next week they'll be able to manage the murder of everyone on earth with ten grams of poison, all in about seven seconds. And we're supposed to just sit around and mourn? Down the hatch! (78)

The anesthetization offered by acceptance of the good old German truth, here made tangible in the form of the Colonel's brandy, is portrayed by Borchert as a ridiculous response to World War Two. The Beckmann of this scene is a caricature, spewing the sort of wisdom found only at the bottom of a bottle. Even in his drunken stupor, Beckmann foresees the consequences of turning his back on moral responsibility, capping off his list of catastrophes which await the world by saying that he has a "deep dark suspicion that pretty soon we should start looking around for another planet for ourselves" (78). Beckmann decides that he might as well be happy; what he did may have been wrong, but it seems as though the whole world has gone wrong anyway. Able to sidestep his guilt for the moment, Beckmann heads "off to the circus" (79).

Beckmann's seemingly random choice to go to the circus at this point is used by Borchert to highlight the absurdity of carrying on with life as if World War Two had never happened. It also serves to emphasize the dissolution of cause and effect; if one can be responsible for deaths but then go on enjoying life, then why should a suicidal man not have himself a rollicking good time under the Big Top? However, the circus is not quite so random a destination as it may seem. The reality of life in post-World War Two Germany is the chief problem facing Beckmann throughout The Outsider.

At this point in the play, Beckmann has already tried to escape this reality via death, tried to evade this reality by pretending that the war never happened, and tried to expunge the guilt that comes with this reality by passing it off to someone else. None of these approaches to reality have brought Beckmann any peace, and so he decides that perhaps he ought to look for meaning in the postwar Germany he faces. Perhaps only subconsciously at this point, Beckmann is reaching the realization that meaning can only be found if he comes to understand the role that he himself played in World War Two. Before he can do this, he must take ownership of his actions. Beckmann already knows that he cannot begin this process via logic and reason—detached assessment of his situation will likely only bring him back to the good old German truth—so he looks instead to the most illogical, irrational place he can think of: the circus.

Scene 4 opens with Beckmann talking to a Cabaret Producer, who seems to confirm his hope that art can ease his transition into postwar reality:

> PRODUCER: (*with great conviction*): So you see, it's precisely here in the field of Art that we really need Youth most again, a Youth which will take a fresh, active stand on all our problems today. (79)

Being needed somewhere is exactly what Beckmann is looking for, now that his former purpose, that of German soldier, no longer exists. However, he finds himself blocked from acceptance again, when the Producer goes on to explain that the 'youth' he wants is merely "the spirit of a Schiller, who wrote his play The Robbers at the age of twenty" (79), not "beginners, newcomers, complete unknowns!" (81). In other words, not a man like Beckmann, who is unknown even to himself. This uncertainty will plague Beckmann until he has taken ownership for his actions, and can thus understand how he has contributed to the erasure of the Germany he had known.

Once again, Beckmann is convinced by The Other to choose the path of life; after leaving the circus it occurs to him to return to his mother, to literally "go back home" (86). Scene 5 finds him at the doorway of his childhood home:

> BECKMANN: That's our door. Behind it life is unwound from an inexhaustible reel. A life which has gone on, unchanged, for thirty years. And which will always go on. War has passed this door by. It hasn't broken it down, it hasn't ripped it off its hinges. It has left our door standing, purely by chance; an oversight. And now the door's there for me. It will open for me; it will close behind me, and I won't be outside anymore. Then I'll be home—*home*. (87)

Perhaps cynically, we know that Beckmann's words are pure fantasy. As Beckmann himself soon discovers, the appearance of a home untouched by the war is an illusion. The building may still stand, but it has changed; the Beckmann family is gone. In their place, Beckmann finds a woman named Mrs. Kramer, who tells him that his parents have committed suicide. Having received unequivocal proof that he is not welcome anywhere, that home literally does not exist anymore, and that even his parents chose the path of

suicide, Beckmann's depression spirals desperately, and he seems once again bound to tread that path himself.

At this critical moment, Borchert reminds the audience that what we have seen of Beckmann thus far has been, as the prologue suggested, a dream:

THE OTHER: Wake...up...Beckman...

BECKMANN: You suddenly sound so faint...you seem so far away suddenly...

THE OTHER: You're dreaming a deadly dream, Beckmann. Wake up! Live! (108)

The "dream" from which Beckmann must wake is the one to which he has been clinging throughout the play, as he has tried to return home to the Germany he knew before the war. This Germany is a vagary, concocted by Beckmann so that he can live the life he knew before World War Two as if nothing had happened. To continue to cling to this world, though, is not to live at all; Beckmann can only survive if he accepts the radically changed Germany to which he has returned. In no small part, this means accepting his own role in the destruction of the Germany of old. The one-legged soldier confronts Beckmann again:

ONE LEGGED MAN: You're still alive, Beckmann? You've committed a murder, Beckmann. And you're still alive.

BECKMANN: I've not committed any murder—

ONE LEGGED MAN: Oh yes you have, Beckmann. We are murdered every day, and every day we commit a murder. And every day we ignore a murder. You murdered me, Beckmann. Have you forgotten already? [...] I don't blame you, Beckmann. We all commit murder, every day, every night. But we don't have to forget our victims so quickly! We shouldn't ignore our murders, not

completely. [...] Now I've been dead exactly one day—and you've forgotten your murder already. You mustn't do that Beckmann, you shouldn't forget your murders right after you commit them: only bad people do that. You won't forget me, Beckmann, will you? You must promise me, Beckmann—you won't forget your murder! (111)

The fallen soldier thus tells Beckmann exactly what he needs to do in order to wake up from his nightmare and to live again. Beckmann can be forgiven for the role he played in World War Two, but only if he recognizes the consequences, and accepts the guilt, for his actions. Beckmann must find a way to live in the German present, and yet he must simultaneously honour the German past, regardless of its horrors. Beckmann promises that he can do this; it is no great revelation to him, as it is essentially what The Other and/or his own conscience have been telling him that he must do all along. The darkness that has haunted Beckmann throughout the play returns, however, as he remembers just how hard this path of life has been. He recalls the obstacles he has faced in this new Germany, recalls that each time he tries to find where he belongs, "A door slams and [I] stand outside once more" (112). In an ending that many critics have interpreted negatively,[53] as the negation of life and of hope, Beckmann questions whether the pain of life is not worse than any death. Angrily, he confronts The Other:

BECKMANN: [...] you say I'm supposed to live! Why? For exactly whom? For what particular purpose? Don't I even have any right to my death, my own suicide? Shall I go on murdering and being murdered? Where shall I finally go? How shall I live? With whom? For what? Where shall we go in this

[53] Aippersbach concludes in her thesis, which is devoted to analysis of interpretation of Borchert's writings, that sixty scholars regard Borchert's message in Draußen vor der Tür as negative, while only eighteen view the play's ending as positive (80-82).

world! We've been betrayed. Terribly betrayed. (113)

However, for the first time in the play, The Other does not respond to Beckmann's cries. Deserted now by even this phantasm, Beckmann's questions echo into the void. He demands answers of The Other, then of God; faced with only a deafening silence, he finally asks, "*Is* there no answer at all?"

Borchert's 1946 audiences were in a state of suspended animation; with their country and their lives still bearing the tangible wounds of defeat, they had not yet begun to move past the devastation of war and to consider Germany's role from a critical distance. By 1957, Sylvanus was faced with an audience no longer paralyzed by the fusillade, but rather one whose movement away from the war had taken them too far. The Outsider is a call to Germans to pull themselves beyond the despair of defeat, and begin to consider themselves not as hapless victims but rather as active participants in the devastating Third Reich. Korczak carries this a step further, reminding ordinary German citizens that as well as sharing some degree of complicity in the destruction of Germany, they must also bear witness to the fact that they themselves were not the intended victims of Hitler's annihilation. In The Outsider, Beckmann must take responsibility for the deaths he may have been in a position to prevent, but those he mourns are the fallen German soldiers in his command. The play challenges the notion that fighting in the name of one's country necessarily makes that fight just. Borchert demonstrates an awareness of the fact that each German must come to terms with his or her own actions during World War Two rather than hiding behind the wall of "German truth." He does not, however, carry the analysis of German guilt to its necessary conclusion, which would absolutely need to take into account Hitler's targets, instead of merely considering those

who died for his unjust cause. I do not suggest that Borchert was an anti-Semite, or that he ignored the question of the Holocaust in a deliberate attempt to minimize the horror of what happened to the Jews. Borchert's oversight may best be understood as a product of his time. In 1946, only just pulling out of the eye of the Regime's violent storm, Germans had not yet had the time required to see the larger picture rather than focus merely on their own situation. Eleven years later, Sylvanus was to push his audiences to see World War Two as not just a German tragedy, but also a human one. Audiences are privy to how Beckmann's choices affect him and his fellow soldiers; in Korczak, they see how similar choices (*i.e.* those of a German soldier) affect others.

It is with some reluctance that Sylvanus' characters consider the question of the systematic eradication of the Jews. After a considerable deal of grumbling about the fact that they will not be performing a real play such as Hamlet, they are scornful of the subject the Narrator proposes; as the First Actor snipes, "Crying for the Jews—it's become the fashionable thing to do nowadays" (119). Not only does this reveal a desire to avoid dwelling upon "problems," it indicates a disturbing attitude towards the Jews. As Sylvanus notes in his stage directions, the events that the actors will go on to depict in the play actually occurred in 1942. However, Korczak's metatheatrical dramaturgy means that at the above-quoted moment in the play, the action is taking place in the time of the actors who are performing it; that is, in 1957, for Sylvanus' first audience. I have observed that Borchert's characters tend to view themselves—ordinary German citizens—as the real victims of World War Two, disregarding those who were actively persecuted. Sylvanus' characters take this attitude an uncomfortable step further, not merely by excluding the Jews from consideration as victims, but by making derisive

remarks which seem to indicate one of two things. At best, the characters believe that what happened to the Jewish people during World War Two, tragic as it may have been, is the Jews' own problem, and should not involve non-Jews like themselves. At worst, the bitterness directed towards those who suggest dredging up the "problem" of the Jews points to a position frighteningly reminiscent of Hitler's. Perhaps the actors do not want to cry for the Jews in the wake of World War Two because if it hadn't been for the Jews, Germany would not have had to suffer those twelve terrible years. Sylvanus leaves the characters' remarks open to either interpretation, likely because he detected twinges of each sentiment in 1950s Germany. Korczak raises the stakes in the German discourse regarding the Nazi past to a level which The Outsider is unable to attempt.

In The Outsider and Korczak, Borchert and Sylvanus reconstruct past experiences in order to objectify them, and thus open up a space for them and their audiences to assume the subject position. Each playwright's narration of the past allows him to take ownership of it; alongside the tangible history of World War Two, the formerly transitory memories each man has of the war have been given material form in the words and actions of their characters. World War Two and the legacy of Nazi Germany are, obviously, unpleasant events in Borchert's and Sylvanus' lives. They, like the majority of German citizens, are transformed into nameless and faceless figures in the 'official' history of that time. The Outsider and Korczak are a different sort of history; they are forms of memory that may touch on historical events, but do not themselves purport to be history. In Western society, the word history often carries with it a presumption of truth. History as related by these plays, however, makes no such claims. The presence of Beckmann and of the Narrator at the heart of their respective stories drives this point

home. Borchert and Sylvanus, speaking through their inherently fictional characters, are able to say to an audience, 'World War Two…This is what *I* remember happening…'. The 'I' is key, because the playwrights want audiences to understand that their own memories, or the witness that each individual is able to bear to the war, is just as valid as The Outsider or Korczak, or as officially documented history, as a testimony to the events of World War Two. The two plays do not stand as stable monuments to history, but rather serve as voices in the national discussion that Germany must engage in as it tries to remember or to determine what truth is. The bare facts of history have their place, absolutely, but the interpretation of history is where Borchert and Sylvanus were able to have a voice in the cultures in which they wrote. Regardless of that voice's message, its importance cannot be underestimated; the freedom to tell one's own history could hardly be taken for granted in the wake of the Third Reich.

The tension created by the paradox of history and fiction is crucial to the understanding of why Borchert and Sylvanus employed recognizably real people and places in their plays. Both plays obstruct the chronicling effect of history via their dramaturgical structures, as discussed throughout this thesis. Chroniclers (*e.g.* prominent cultural theorist Mieke Bal) often develop their own systems of telling history in order to more effectively relate and to better understand its official record. As Naomi Jacobs writes in The Character of Truth: Historical Figures in Contemporary Fiction, "The close interaction of historical characters with fictional ones, and the tightly woven way in which historical events are interwoven with imaginary ones finally produce in the reader an "anxiety of critical reception" (74). In The Outsider and Korczak, where dramaturgical structure has already positioned audiences for critical reception, the

question becomes not "What really happened?," but rather "*Why* did it happen?" The audience is forced into intellectual rather than merely sensual reception of the play, in part because of Borchert and Sylvanus' conscious presentation of *fictionalized fact.*

What I have called 'fictionalized fact' is, significantly, a direct reversal of the factualized fiction that films such as Triumph of the Will and The Eternal Jew had sold to German audiences in the days of the Goebbels Ministry of Propaganda. This inverted parallel illustrates perfectly why Borchert and Sylvanus needed to write plays which presented historical truth as the product of individual perception. The effect of this is two-fold. First, as Glenda Abramson writes in 'The Cultural Uses of the Holocaust':

> Many contemporary philosophers of history question the ability of history to reveal absolute truths, and they therefore resist what they believe is the artificial separation of history and literature. They support the post-modern blurring of the boundaries between history and fiction." (22)

By presenting their own ideologies regarding Germany's past, rather than insisting upon a narration of historical accuracy, Borchert and Sylvanus actually give their words a greater weight with audiences mistrustful of fictions purporting to be truth.

Secondly, in reformulating the fact/fiction dichotomy, Borchert and Sylvanus struck upon the ideal medium for addressing Germany's postwar guilt. The guilt was, as I have demonstrated in Chapter One, collectively engendered; it only makes sense that it should be alleviated in the same way. Borchert and Sylvanus reclaim the fact/fiction game that both the Nazis and the early postwar occupying Allies had used to impose their will upon the German people. In both these plays, the closeness of fact and fiction becomes freeing rather than manipulative. The Outsider and Korczak invite their

respective audiences to reevaluate the facts of the past so that they might achieve a personal understanding of the lessons World War Two might be able to teach.

CONCLUSION

The theatre of Borchert and Sylvanus provided a forum in which postwar German citizens could address the nation's traumatic past. Clearly, not every German witnessed, or was even aware of, these plays, but their influence was far-reaching. Beyond the impact that they had upon their first German audiences, Borchert and Sylvanus introduced issues such as German guilt, and the need to return to the trauma of the war and the Holocaust, into socio-cultural discourse, and out of the shadows that a reluctant culture had relegated them to. The Outsider and Korczak reminded Germans of the questions that they needed to ask themselves if the past was ever to be understood. However, as theorists like Charles Maier have recognized, this past would always remain, in a sense, "unmasterable." Borchert's and Sylvanus' postwar audiences may have been able to learn to listen to their past, and heed its valuable lessons, but this did not mean that the trauma of World War Two ceased to plague German consciousness.

I have commented repeatedly upon the fact that 1946 and 1957 marked two very distinct phases in Germany's willingness and capacity to bear meaningful witness to the past. Sylvanus' 1957 audiences possessed a greater awareness of the magnitude of the trauma than did Borchert's 1946 patrons, but this does not mean that in 1957 all of the issues had been resolved. World War Two and the Holocaust irrevocably altered the course of human history, and German citizens struggle with their own role in these tragedies even today. Borchert and Sylvanus were among the first German playwrights to recognize the potential of theatre to serve as a means by which the nation could reconstruct, reconsider, and perhaps repossess its traumatic past. Playwrights like Rolf Hochhuth (Der Stellvertreter (The Deputy), 1964), and Heiner Müller (Hamletmachine,

1979) have moved the question of Germany's political legacy forward for subsequent audiences. While the significance of these later plays cannot be underestimated, and they are indeed a vital component of the ongoing dialogue between Germany's past, its present, and its future, we must not forget where that dialogue began. The Outsider and Korczak remain relevant today because they are excellent examples of the ways in which theatre may be utilized in the process of dealing with past trauma.

In my Introduction, I proposed four challenges that Borchert and Sylvanus needed to meet if their plays were to succeed. The Outsider and Korczak require ordinary German citizens to return to World War Two and the Holocaust as participants in, not as passive victims of, these traumas. This return to the past demands a pointed examination of the choices that were available to such citizens during the Nazi era. Audiences are asked to assume responsibility, first for these choices, and then for the necessary work of bearing witness to World War Two (in 1946), and to the Holocaust (1957). Trauma Theory provides a valuable framework by which to examine The Outsider's and Korczak's address of these challenges. Acknowledgement of the ephemeral nature of reality, and explorations of the concepts of Choice, Guilt, and Ownership as stages in the resolution of trauma, are laudable approaches to understanding Borchert's and Sylvanus' plays.

By allowing audiences to reconstruct the past in a meaningful way, that is to say in a way that is shaped by an individual's unique perception of that past, these plays permit audiences to assert ownership of traumatic experiences. While this ownership is painful, it is necessary if audience members are to position themselves as the active agents of their own present circumstances, and as the authors of their own futures. In

bearing witness to the victims of World War Two and the Holocaust, audiences of The Outsider and Korczak were able to construct the only sort of meaning that one might be able to find in such atrocities; via this meaning came understanding; via this understanding came the knowledge that would empower future societies to prevent such history from ever being repeated. Although we may never be able to understand World War Two, revisitation of the trauma may permit an understanding of one's own relation to it. In the case of Borchert's and Sylvanus' first audiences, this might entail accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's choices and actions during the Nazi era. In the case of present-day audiences, this might mean the realization that, although they were not present at the site of the trauma, they have a moral responsibility to bear witness to it. By understanding one's own role in World War Two, either as a survivor of it, or as one who lives in a world that was forever changed by it, it is possible for individuals to understand the ways in which they may—and must—guard against the possibility that something so horrific could ever happen again.

The Outsider and Korczak opened up a much-needed space for the above process to unfold in postwar Germany, but that space is no less vital today. Just as Sylvanus' 1957 audiences were able to attend to the trauma better than Borchert's 1946 audiences, time has afforded present-day audiences greater perspective upon the tragedy. As critic Brian Bethune writes in his discussion of Günter Grass' 2002 novel Im Krebsgang (Crabwalk):

> If Günter Grass, now 75 and throughout his career a voice of moderation in German affairs, can feel it's finally appropriate to write about his people's past suffering, it may well signal that mainstream German opinion is now ready to

reclaim its history. (90)

Seminal works such as W. G. Sebald's 1999 Luftkrieg und Literatur (On the Natural History of Destruction), or its "fictional counterpart" Crabwalk (Bethune 90), suggest that we have reached a point in human history at which we may finally be capable of Vergangenheitsbewältigung (coming to terms with, or mastering, the past).

We share neither Beckmann's nor the actors' present, the German past is ours only in the broadest human context, and our own future is divergent. However, the trauma of World War Two was and is both a universal and a highly individual entity. Separated from the individual traumas by continents and decades, it is perhaps easier for modern North American audiences to relate to The Outsider and Korczak as defining influences upon our own humanity. This approach to analysis and appreciation of theatre is valid, but it may also present a danger. Because we truly cannot know what Beckmann and the actors are experiencing, in the way that postwar Germany audiences perhaps could, we must remember to listen for the individual stories each play tells, and not merely hear them as part of some master narration of the tragic German experience of the war. We must also remember that World War Two is less meaningful to us if we conceive of it as some dusty museum relic, and fail to see the ways that, although it is the past, it is also the present. This point was equally important for Borchert's and Sylvanus' postwar audiences to remember, and is indeed the reason that each playwright had for returning to the darkest moments of the war. The Narrator in Korczak may reflect the views of 1957 German audiences when he says that 1942 Poland is "a long way from here," but the play goes on to illustrate that this is not the case at all.

If World War Two is relegated to the past, both its lessons and its horrors may be forgotten. In truth, the trauma would not be forgotten, but merely repressed. Theatre prevents this from happening. As scholar Stephen Levine writes:

> Drama [...] is the enactment of a story in the present. [...] The myth happens again, right here and now. It becomes present for us, not as something with the index of "having been," as it would in a narrative mode, but with that of "happening now," before our eyes. (3)

As Levine astutely observes, theatre, unlike other narratives that bear witness to the past, effectively renders past as present. While this ability to overcome the linearity of time is perhaps an innate property of all drama, Borchert's and Sylvanus' dramaturgical strategies in The Outsider and Korczak optimize this potential. By positioning audiences not merely as observers, but as participants as well, Borchert and Sylvanus draw attention to the fact that Beckmann's and the actors' struggles are not limited to a fictional world depicted onstage. By including audiences in the plays, whether they wish to be included or not, the dramaturgy of The Outsider and Korczak ensures that their stories of the past remain relevant, and remain a part of 1946 and 1957 Germany. Likewise, audiences today cannot help but recognize the fact that these plays remain topical, no matter how far away the problems facing postwar Germany may seem to be.

Both The Outsider and Korczak are decidedly experimental in terms of their dramaturgy. This may be understood in part as reclamation of artistic freedom—Borchert turns to Expressionism, a style expressly banned under the Nazis, and Sylvanus has no use for Hamlet, the sort of play that the Third Reich had embraced as it touted its own sophistication. To a far greater extent, the shape of each play is dictated by its

author's grappling with the question of where to place the audience. Audiences are scripted into the plays, whether by Beckmann's emergence from the ranks of the spectators in the Prologue of The Outsider, or by the Narrator's direct address early in Korczak. However, it is the stakes of involvement which makes the positioning of the audience so significant. In The Outsider, audiences are intended to identify themselves with Beckmann, and in Korczak, they see that they are represented by the actors. In both plays, acceptance of this position entails acceptance of moral responsibility; audiences are made participants in the choices that Borchert's and Sylvanus' characters must face. The Outsider and Korczak allow audiences to witness the trauma of World War Two and the Holocaust, by revealing just how proximate the experiences of both its victims and its agents are.

The dramaturgies of The Outsider and Korczak do make it possible for audiences to elude this culpability, but the alternative position they may take is far worse. Audiences are scripted into the plays from the start, so their presence in the narrative is assured. Active engagement in the moral landscapes of the plays is one option, as I have outlined above. Passive elusion is the other, but if audiences merely watch the difficult choices that Borchert's and Sylvanus' characters must make, they miss the opportunity to take ownership of these. On the surface this is appealing; in truth, there is no great solace to be found in neglecting the chance to understand why these choices were made. German writer Heinrich Böll has said that, "An individual, a society without memory is a sick individual, a sick society."[54] Though remembering is a difficult process, The Outsider and Korczak position audiences to bear witness to the trauma of World War

[54] Heinrich Böll (1917-85) was perhaps the FRG's harshest, and certainly one of its most vocal, critics. This quote is taken from *Die Fähigkeit zu trauern*, a collection of Böll's writings during the final two years of his life.

Two and the Holocaust, and offer the hope that postwar German society may begin to heal.

The world and Germany were not the same after World War Two and the Holocaust. Perhaps naively, postwar German audiences may have longed for art to be the seemingly innocent escape it had posed as throughout the Third Reich. Art under the Nazis had not been so benign, however, and so if audiences had been content to watch films such as Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will then, they had a moral obligation to watch plays like The Outsider and Korczak after the war. Entertainment was psychology under Goebbels, thus it makes sense that it is psychology for Borchert and Sylvanus. Under Goebbels the goal was to turn the critical mind off. The sixth Nuremberg Party Congress documented in Triumph of the Will was an empty simulacra, but this hardly mattered. Perhaps German audiences did not realize that purported history was pure pageantry; perhaps they did not care. Despite its elaborate ornamentation, the message conveyed by the film was quite simple: the Nazi movement represents Germany's rebirth, its revitalization, and its future. Borne solely by images of Hitler as the face of this glory, Nazi truth is only an illusion. As playwrights in post-World War Two Germany, Borchert and Sylvanus faced the challenge of finding ways to turn their audiences' critical minds back on, and away from such illusions. They began by dismantling Nazi-era glorification of the nation, and by breaking with the mythologization of German history. Artists in a time when art appeared to have lost all meaning, Borchert and Sylvanus responded to the historical phenomena of postwar Germany in different ways. For Borchert in 1946, the immediate trauma was the war itself; The Outsider is his attempt to witness the complex role that many German citizens played in it, as they were

both victims and agents of Germany's destruction. By 1957, Sylvanus' widened perspective allowed him to bear witness to the Jews, victims of ideology as well as of war.

The timeless themes of The Outsider and Korczak speak to current events. For example, how will future generations regard Bosnian President, Serb Slobodan Milosovic's attempts to eliminate the nation's vilified ethnic and religious minorities? Or, how will theatre attempt to address the current deadly struggle in Iraq based upon the Anglo-American assertion of that country's real and imminent threat to 'free' civilization? Providing the realization that theatre plays a vital role in our ability to witness events and to witness ourselves as the agents of history is Borchert's and Sylvanus' most enduring accomplishment.

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